



Office of the President

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Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President

January 9, 2013

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20270

Mr. President:

As our Conference of Bishops has frequently noted, our nation has a special obligation to exercise vigorous leadership for Israeli-Palestinian peace. We affirm your support of the two-state solution, promise our support for strong U.S. leadership for peace, and urge you even to consider appointing a high profile envoy in hopes that as in the past this might advance peace and justice in the region.

Tragically, actions by Palestinians and Israelis perpetuate an unsustainable status quo that is profoundly dangerous to both peoples and eventually the entire Middle East. As your administration has often pointed out, both sides are threatening the possibility of a two-state solution to the conflict—a secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state. The failure to achieve peace continues to take a heavy toll on both Israelis and Palestinians, and especially on the indigenous ancient Christian community of the Holy Land that is emigrating at alarming rates.

The rocket attacks from Gaza into Southern Israel represent a pattern of morally unjustifiable uses of indiscriminate force against civilians. They spread fear among Israeli families and damage the Palestinian cause by undercutting the trust necessary for negotiations.

Israeli occupation and security policies are also seriously and systematically weakening the two-state solution. The route of the security barrier and the expansion of illegal settlements in the West Bank compromise the territorial viability of a future Palestinian state.

We make our own the words of our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, when he visited Israel and Palestine in 2009: “No more bloodshed! No more fighting! No more terrorism! No more war! Instead let us break the vicious circle of violence. Let there be lasting peace based on justice, let there be genuine reconciliation and healing. Let it be universally recognized that the State of Israel has the right to exist, and to enjoy peace and security within internationally agreed borders. Let it be likewise acknowledged that the Palestinian people have a right to a sovereign independent homeland, to live with dignity and to travel freely. Let the two-state solution become a reality, not remain a dream.”

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This Christmas in his Midnight Mass Homily in Bethlehem, Patriarch Fouad Twal, the Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, said: "From this Holy Place, I invite politicians and men of good will to work with determination for peace and reconciliation that encompasses Palestine and Israel in the midst of all the sufferings in the Middle East."

What is urgently needed is indefatigable and insistent leadership. The United States, as a consequence of its relationships and potentially significant influence, is poised, in our estimation, to be the most effective arbiter in this tangled situation that portends enormous risk for the world.

Our Conference, therefore, promises unfailing support of strong U.S. leadership that holds both parties accountable for building a just and lasting peace. Leaders on all sides must give Israelis and Palestinians hope for a different future free of the shadows of violence and open to the light of peace.

Sincerely yours,

- + *Tim. Card. Dolan*

Timothy Cardinal Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President, United States Conference
of Catholic Bishops

+ *Richard E Pates*

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates
Bishop of Des Moines
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