



## *Committee on International Justice and Peace*

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November 20, 2012

Thomas E. Donilon, National Security Advisor  
White House  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. Donilon:

The escalating violence between Gaza and southern Israel is cause for alarm. The recent rocket attacks from Gaza into Israel, including some as distant as Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, represent a continuing pattern of morally unjustifiable uses of indiscriminate force. A recent barrage resulted in the deaths of at least three Israeli civilians.

Israel has a right to defend its citizens, but its use of force must be proportionate and discriminate. The media report that Israeli air attacks have killed about 100 Palestinians and wounded many more. The Director of Caritas Jerusalem noted that the hospitals in Gaza are “overwhelmed with casualties” and is appealing for supplies. This continuing violence has serious implications for the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict and for regional stability.

The Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem, Fouad Twal, has expressed “solidarity to all victims who are at the center of our thoughts and prayers.” He has also prayed “that all those who have roles of responsibility in this conflict will not give in to hate.” We share the Patriarch’s concerns.

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge the United States to exercise leadership with countries in the region and internationally to end this cycle of violence and retaliation before it spirals further out of control. Violence will not bring peace to the region; it will only reinforce historic hurts and deepen divisions, making peace even more remote.

Indefensible rocket attacks must end. There must be a reversal of Israeli policies that undermine the possibility of a two-state solution. Palestinians must renounce violence, improve security and strengthen governance. Israelis must stop settlement expansion in the West Bank, ease residency requirements and end home demolitions that harm Palestinian families, and review the route of the security barrier for its impact on Palestinian lives and livelihoods.

An immediate cease fire must be negotiated as a precondition so that leaders on both sides can give Israelis and Palestinians hope for a different future free of fear and full of promise.

Sincerely yours,

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Most Reverend Richard E. Pates  
Bishop of Des Moines  
Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace