



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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January 5, 2018

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
2201 C Street
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I write with urgency regarding Israel and Palestine.

Bishop Oscar Cantú, my predecessor, wrote to you in February: “USCCB has long supported a two-state solution, a ‘secure and recognized Israel living in peace alongside a viable and independent Palestinian state.’ For this reason, we implore you to maintain the U.S. embassy in Tel-Aviv. Relocating the embassy to Jerusalem is tantamount to recognizing Jerusalem as the undivided capital of Israel. In fact, decades ago, the international community determined that the status of Jerusalem is to be decided in negotiations as mutually agreed by Israel and Palestine. Moving the embassy to Jerusalem would erode the U.S. commitment to a two-state solution, and is a threat to pursuing peace and ending conflict.”

The international reaction to the decision of the United States to recognize Jerusalem as Israel’s capital reinforces these concerns. The violent protests against this decision make it clear that the issue remains a festering wound. The President stated that this decision is “not taking a position of any final status issues, including the specific boundaries of the Israeli sovereignty in Jerusalem, or the resolution of contested borders.” However, absent a corresponding commitment to the Palestinians regarding East Jerusalem, it is difficult to see how this position will serve the goal of achieving a two-state solution.

In a December 6, 2017, letter to the President, the Patriarch and those responsible for the local Churches in Jerusalem, urged “the United States to continue recognizing the present international status of Jerusalem.” They warned that “sudden changes would cause irreparable harm.” Pope Francis made a “heartfelt appeal for everyone’s commitment to respect the city’s status quo, in conformity with the pertinent United Nations Resolutions.”

As Pope Francis has said, “the two-state solution must become a reality and not merely a dream.” Jerusalem must be “preserved as the capital of the three religions, as a point of reference, as a city of peace.”

Mr. Secretary, resolving the long-standing conflict will require prudence and wisdom. I urge you to consider placing on hold any move of the embassy as you seek to advance a diplomatic solution that respects the legitimate aspirations of both Israelis and Palestinians and promotes a just peace.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Timothy P. Broglio
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops