



Office of the President

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Most Reverend William S. Skylstad, D.D.
Bishop of Spokane

April 19, 2007

Tzipi Livni, MK
Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs
9 Yitzhak Rabin Blvd.
Kiryat Ben-Gurion
Jerusalem 91035

Fax: 972-2-5303367
Email: sar@mfa.gov.il

Dear Vice Prime Minister Livni,

Our deep and abiding relationship with the Jewish community in the United States and our unwavering commitment to the security of Israel led the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to welcome in a special way the signing of the Fundamental Agreement between the Holy See and the State of Israel more than a dozen years ago.

Without addressing the specifics of the negotiations, which are for direct discussion between the Holy See and the government of Israel, our Conference of Bishops has followed the situation very closely for more than a decade. We continue to be deeply dismayed by the lack of progress over these many years and were particularly disappointed to learn that the latest meeting had been cancelled by the State of Israel. We fear that such delays and a lack of substantive progress reflect an absence of serious commitment on the part of the Israeli government in negotiations with the Holy See over these matters of vital importance to the Catholic Church in the Holy Land and the broader Catholic community.

In the Fundamental Agreement, the Holy See formally recognized and established official diplomatic ties with the state of Israel. This recognition proceeded without a full resolution of outstanding major issues of concern to the Church, but with the promise by the Israeli government that these issues would be seriously and promptly addressed through further negotiations based upon the historic rights of the Church in the Holy Land.

A timely and successful conclusion of the negotiations is long overdue and would be well received by the Catholic Church in the United States. We urge you to exercise sustained leadership in finally bringing about an acceptable resolution of this matter that is of such great concern to the Church in the Holy Land, in the United States and throughout the world. Thank you for your efforts to understand and act on this urgent priority affecting the vital relationship between Israel and the Catholic Church.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane
President



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His Excellency
Sallai Meridor
Ambassador of Israel
3514 International Drive, NW
Washington, DC 20008

Dear Mr. Ambassador,

I write to you at this time to request the kind assistance of your office in transmitting the enclosed letter via your diplomatic channels to Tzipi Livni, MK, Vice Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs in Jerusalem.

A copy of the correspondence is enclosed for your information.

I am most grateful for your attention to this request.

In appreciation for your helpful assistance to me and to our Conference, I remain

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend William S. Skylstad
Bishop of Spokane
President

Enclosure