



Office of the President

3211 FOURTH STREET NE • WASHINGTON DC 20017-1194 • 202-541-3100 • FAX 202-541-3166

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz
Archbishop of Louisville
President

March 12, 2014

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President:

As your Administration works for Israeli-Palestinian peace, we write to commend your efforts and those of Secretary of State John Kerry. We are acutely aware of the difficulties of the quest for a lasting and just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We affirm your concerted initiative in the coming days and weeks to reach a framework agreement as a basis for resolving the longstanding Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Pope Francis and the Holy See have expressed support for this work. In January our Holy Father, in an address to the diplomatic corps, said: “[T]he resumption of peace talks between Israelis and Palestinians is a positive sign, and I express my hope that both parties will resolve, with the support of the international community, to take courageous decisions aimed at finding a just and lasting solution to a conflict which urgently needs to end.”

Our Conference of Bishops has made the Holy Father’s hope our own. For decades our Conference has urged U.S. leadership for peace. Our Conference continues to support a two-state solution to the conflict, a secure and recognized Israel living in peace with a viable and independent Palestinian state. We recognize the legitimate aspirations of the two peoples and three faiths who share this land that is holy to us. We affirm the religious freedom of Jews, Christians and Muslims, especially to access their Holy Sites in the Holy Land.

As bishops and pastors, we ask our Catholic people to redouble their prayerful efforts to support Israelis and Palestinians in achieving peace. In a special way, we pray for the vulnerable Christian community in the Holy Land, a community that has suffered as a result of the ongoing conflict.

Please be assured of our support and prayers. May God grant our nation and the international community, and in particular, the leaders of Israel and Palestine, the wisdom and courage needed to build peace with justice for all.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Joseph E. Kurtz, D.D.
Archbishop of Louisville
President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

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