



## *Department of Social Development and World Peace*

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December 1, 2006

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

**BY FAX: 202-456-2883**

Dear Secretary Rice:

The assassination of Lebanese cabinet minister Pierre Gemayel is another sign of the deepening crisis and instability in Lebanon. As chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge the Administration to strengthen its efforts with the international community to support full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701 regarding Lebanon.

Our Conference believes that concerted action by the United States and the international community is required at this time to ensure the sovereignty and stability of Lebanon. Tragically and predictably, the recent war in Lebanon and northern Israel not only devastated civilian communities, but it also weakened the forces of moderation and democracy and emboldened radicals.

The United States, in coordination with the U.N. Security Council, must work with even greater resolve to strengthen the current ceasefire and support the expanded U.N. peacekeeping force working with the Lebanese army to assert exclusive Lebanese government authority throughout southern Lebanon. A resolution of the crisis requires disarmament of militias, a permanent ceasefire, an eventual peace agreement with Israel, and reconstruction assistance for Lebanon. All nations in the region will need to play constructive roles in helping the Lebanese people resolve their own internal political crisis and refrain from actions that could further destabilize the situation.

The United States should join the international community in providing substantial humanitarian and reconstruction assistance to Lebanon to help rebuild the civilian infrastructure and restore devastated communities that experienced destruction due to the war. We must replace the despair that feeds radicalism with a hope for a brighter future for the long suffering people of Lebanon.

Our Conference of bishops has strong ties of solidarity with the people of Lebanon. Lebanon is a country where Christians and Muslims share a common responsibility for governance and a common future. Our relief and development agency, Catholic Relief Services, is on the ground

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in Lebanon providing humanitarian and development assistance through Caritas Lebanon and other local partners.

As the people of Lebanon mourn the loss of yet another leader to the heinous act of assassination, our nation must act creatively and constructively to strengthen full implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1701.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski  
Bishop of Orlando

Chairman, Committee on International Policy