



Office of the President

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Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President

September 5, 2013

United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator:

As Congress takes up a resolution to authorize the use of military force in Syria, we want to assure you of our prayers and offer a contribution to that debate from our perspective as Catholic pastors and teachers.

We absolutely condemn the use of chemical weapons in Syria. These indiscriminate weapons have no place in the arsenals of the family of nations. With you we mourn for the lives lost and grieve with the families of the deceased. At the same time, we remain profoundly concerned for the more than 100,000 Syrians who have lost their lives, the more than 2 million who have fled the country as refugees, and the more than 4 million within Syria who have been driven from their homes by the violence. Our focus is on the humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Syria and on saving lives by ending the conflict, not fueling it.

We have heard the urgent calls of the Successor of Saint Peter, Pope Francis, and our suffering brother bishops of the venerable and ancient Christian communities of the Middle East. As one, they beg the international community *not* to resort to military intervention in Syria. They have made it clear that a military attack will be counterproductive, will exacerbate an already deadly situation, and will have unintended negative consequences. Their concerns strongly resonate in American public opinion that questions the wisdom of intervention and in the lack of international consensus.

We make our own the appeal of Pope Francis: “I exhort the international community to make every effort to promote clear proposals for peace in that country without further delay, a peace based on dialogue and negotiation, for the good of the entire Syrian people. May no effort be spared in guaranteeing humanitarian assistance to those wounded by this terrible conflict, in particular those forced to flee and the many refugees in nearby countries.”

The Congressional resolution acknowledges that “the conflict in Syria will only be resolved through a negotiated political settlement.” A central moral question is: Will more or less lives and livelihoods be destroyed by military intervention? On this question Pope Francis has been clear: “How much suffering, how much devastation, how much pain has the use of arms carried in its wake in that martyred country, especially among civilians and the unarmed!” Instead of employing armed force, in this situation our nation, working with the international community, should direct all of its energies urgently and tirelessly toward dialogue and negotiation.

The longstanding position of our Conference of Bishops is that the Syrian people urgently need a political solution. We ask the United States to work with other governments to obtain a ceasefire, initiate serious negotiations, provide impartial humanitarian assistance, and encourage efforts to build an inclusive society in Syria that protects the rights of all its citizens, including Christians and other minorities.

Please be assured of our prayers as Congress faces the complex challenges and humanitarian catastrophe that have engulfed Syria.

Sincerely yours,

- + *Tim. Card. Dolan*

Timothy Cardinal M. Dolan
Archbishop of New York
President
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

+ *Richard E Pates*

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



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Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan
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September 5, 2013

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

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