



Committee on International Justice and Peace

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August 29, 2013

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

Today Pope Francis met with King Abdullah II of Jordan. Regarding their meeting, the Holy See reported: “Special attention was reserved for the tragic situation in which Syria finds itself. In this regard, it was reaffirmed that the path of *dialogue and negotiation* between all components of Syrian society, with the support of the international community, *is the only option* to put an end to the conflict and to the violence that every day causes the loss of so many human lives, especially amongst the helpless civilian population.”

With the Holy Father, we abhor the “acts of atrocity” that he decried in the wake of the attack with chemical weapons. We make our own his admonition: May the “clash of weapons... be silenced. It is not conflict that offers prospects of hope for solving problems, but rather the capacity for encounter and dialogue.”

The longstanding position of our Conference of Bishops is that the Syrian people urgently need a political solution that ends the fighting and creates a future for all Syrians, one that respects human rights and religious freedom. We ask the United States to work with other governments to obtain a ceasefire, initiate serious negotiations, provide impartial and neutral humanitarian assistance, and encourage building an inclusive society in Syria that protects the rights of all its citizens, including Christians and other minorities.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Richard E. Pates

Bishop of Des Moines

Chair, Committee on International Justice and Peace
United States Conference of Catholic Bishops