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MEMORANDUM

TO: All Bishops

FROM: Most Reverend Richard E. Pates, Bishop of Des Moines and Chairman,
Committee on International Justice and Peace
Most Reverend Gerald Kicanas, Bishop of Tucson and Chairman, Board, Catholic
Relief Services

RE: **Update on Egypt**

DATE: August 23, 2013

The dire situation of political unrest in Egypt and the tragic violence, often aimed at the Christian community, calls for our response and prayers. Both the Committee on International Justice and Peace and Catholic Relief Services have been part of our Conference's official response.

The Committee on International Justice and Peace has intervened with the U.S. government to convey the Holy Father's emphasis on the need for "peace, dialogue and reconciliation." We have urged the United States to work with the international community to support efforts by Egyptians to strengthen public order and the rule of law and to build an inclusive democracy respectful of human rights and religious freedom.

In a letter to Secretary of State Kerry, our Conference has expressed a special concern for the Christian community in Egypt, noting that extremists have scapegoated Christians, blaming them for the current state of affairs, and viciously attacked Christian churches, institutions and communities, destroying property and terrorizing people. The letter also mentioned that the Church in Egypt reports that many of their Muslim neighbors have come to their defense.

The possibility of cuts to U.S. foreign assistance has been discussed in the press. In response, the Conference urged our government to preserve, and even increase, humanitarian and economic assistance, arguing that poor and vulnerable Egyptians should not pay the price of the violence gripping their nation. Increasing desperation and misery will exacerbate Egypt's challenges, fueling more frustration and violence. In particular, we called the Secretary's attention to the various refugee populations in Egypt from the Horn of Africa, Iraq, Syria and elsewhere. These refugees are particularly vulnerable; they need continued assistance and protection.

Catholic Relief Services is continuing to represent our Conference and the U.S. Catholic community on the ground in Egypt. CRS is working with the Church in Egypt to help those in greatest need who are often most impacted by violence and political unrest. CRS is currently helping to rehabilitate Church schools that have been burned and looted. These schools are known for providing some of the best quality education that is available to the entire population

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and thus carry great value for the Church and the entire local community. CRS is mobilizing funds and identifying engineers and other experts who can help respond to current needs and who will be available to rehabilitate additional schools and clinics if necessary.

At the same time, CRS is continuing its ongoing programming and is responding to critical human needs even as the crisis in Egypt unfolds. We are helping to educate thousands of refugee children who have come to Egypt from Syria, Iraq and countries throughout Africa; it is aiding young women vulnerable to sex trafficking; it has helped over 15,000 people find work and provide for their families during the recent years of turmoil and economic uncertainty. To foster dialogue, tolerance and acceptance among religions, CRS is continuing a program begun last year with the Coptic Catholic Church. This program has brought together 12,000 Christians and Muslims and is all the more important in light of recent events.

Our Conference will continue to reach out directly to the people and Church in Egypt. At the same time we will urge our government to find ways to support respect for human rights, religious freedom, and the building of an inclusive democracy in which all Egyptians have a stake and a voice. We will serve those most in need, and press for an end to the violence, a return to the rule of law, the protection of the Christian community, and the initiation of “dialogue and reconciliation” that leads to an inclusive future for all Egyptians.