



Department of Justice, Peace, and Human Development

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Note: Identical letters were sent to Representative Berman, Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Representative Brad Sherman and Representative Ed Royce.

July 11, 2008

The Honorable Howard Berman
Chairman, Foreign Affairs Committee
United States House of Representatives
2221 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0528

By Fax: (202) 225-3196

Dear Mr. Berman:

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge your support for the Global Security Priorities Act (H.Res. 1045), which was introduced by Congressmen Dan Lungren and James McGovern, and ask that you exercise your leadership in taking action to approve the resolution and report it out of Committee before the end of July. This bold initiative links long-term savings derived from reducing our nuclear arsenal to increased support for nuclear nonproliferation efforts and child survival programs. It sends a powerful message of hope to a world longing for greater security and peace based on justice.

We bishops approach the issues of reducing nuclear arsenals and securing nuclear materials as pastors and teachers, not as military experts. Nonetheless, the use of nuclear weapons is rejected in Church teaching because their use cannot insure noncombatant immunity and their destructive potential and lingering radiation cannot be proportionate in any meaningful sense. Pope Benedict XVI has said, "In a nuclear war there would be no victors, only victims." (January 1, 2006)

For these moral reasons, the bishops have long supported the dismantling of nuclear weapons systems, the effective securing of nuclear materials from terrorists, and a reduction in the overall number of nuclear armaments. Our goal is to prevent proliferation of these horrific weapons, and ultimately to eliminate them. The Global Security Priorities Act embraces these goals and takes important steps in this direction.

By adopting deep cuts in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, our nation can move toward meeting its obligations under the Nonproliferation Treaty and encourage other nations to do the same. The reduction of nuclear weapons and securing of nuclear materials called for in this Resolution will strengthen our nation's credibility and leadership on the issue of nonproliferation. Other nuclear powers will be less dependent on their own nuclear deterrents and non-nuclear nations will be less tempted to ignore their nonproliferation obligations.

The Church's social teaching has particular relevance to the necessary struggle against terrorism. Following 9/11 our Bishops' Conference argued, "A successful campaign against terrorism will require

The Honorable Howard Berman

July 11, 2008

Page Two

a combination of resolve to do what is necessary to see it through, restraint to ensure that we act justly, and a long term focus on broader issues of justice and peace.” Our Conference went on to say: “Our nation must join with others in addressing policies and problems that provide fertile ground in which terrorism can thrive.”

Based on the moral insight that if we want peace, we must work for justice, we commend the Resolution’s commitment to “enhance child survival in the world’s most needy countries” and to improve “child nutrition and educational opportunities.” Through funding of such vital programs we can strengthen our nation’s commitment to reduce global poverty and the desperate situations of injustice and deprivation that terrorists exploit for their own terrible purposes.

Our Conference of Bishops urges broad and deep bipartisan support of the Global Security Priorities act, H.Res. 1045. This legislation will help our nation to contribute to greater security, justice and peace in our world through reducing nuclear armaments, securing nuclear material, especially from terrorists, and improving child survival and nutrition among desperately poor societies.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and
Peace