

# Churches for Middle East Peace



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American Friends Service Committee

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(Disciples of Christ)  
Common Global Ministries Board

Church of the Brethren

Church World Service

Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church  
in America

Franciscan Friars (OFM)  
English Speaking Conference,  
JPIC Council

Friends Committee on National  
Legislation

Greek Orthodox Archdiocese  
of America

Maryknoll Missioners

Mennonite Central Committee

Moravian Church in America

National Council of Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Unitarian Universalist Association

United Church of Christ  
Common Global Ministries Board

United Methodist Church  
General Board of Church and Society  
General Board of Global Ministries:  
Women's Division

February 23, 2009

The Honorable Gary Ackerman  
2243 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515-3205

Dear Representative Ackerman,

Thank you very much for your powerful and enlightened opening statement at the February 12, 2009, hearing of the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, "Gaza After the War: What Can Be Built on the Wreckage?"

Churches for Middle East Peace, an organization sponsored by 22 Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant churches and church organizations, commends you for holding these important hearings. We agree with your assessment that the dangerous downward spiral in Israeli-Palestinian relations comes from "terrorism and the march of settlements and outposts, from the firing of rockets and the perpetration of settler pogroms."

Churches for Middle East Peace supports determined U.S. leadership to achieve a durable and lasting Israeli-Palestinian agreement that will allow a secure Israel and a viable Palestinian state to live side by side in peace and with normal relations. We agree that continued violence and settlement activity pose grave obstacles to the achievement of that outcome. An agreement will be essential to the national security interests of the United States as well as for the security of Israel and of the Palestinian people.

In May 2001, the report of a high level group of U.S., Norwegian, Turkish, and EU officials chaired by Senator George Mitchell concluded that "A cessation of Palestinian-Israeli violence will be particularly hard to sustain unless the Government of Israel freezes all settlement construction activity... including the 'natural growth' of existing settlements. The kind of security cooperation desired by the Government of Israel cannot for long co-exist with settlement activity." Nearly eight years later the Mitchell report remains a sound prescription for what is needed to pave the way for Israeli-Palestinian peace. Indeed, as you pointed out in your statement the success of the current Palestinian Authority security reform efforts depends in part on Israeli actions.

We applaud your recognition of the various causes of the downward spiral in Israeli-Palestinian relations. We urge you to promote awareness in Congress and among the public of the causes of this dangerous deterioration by continuing to hold hearings such as those that you held February 12.

We also urge you to vigorously support the mission of the U.S. special envoy for Middle East peace, George Mitchell, in every way possible, including by supporting H. Res. 130 introduced on February 4, 2009. This resolution affirms the importance and urgency of achieving Israeli-Palestinian peace. House passage of H.Res. 130 would signal strong support for U.S. efforts to reverse the downward spiral that you that you so rightly described in your February 12 statement.

Thank you for your very important statement. And thank you for considering additional steps that you can take to achieve Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Warren Clark". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Warren Clark  
Executive Director