

Churches for Middle East Peace



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Christian Church
(Disciples of Christ)
Common Global Ministries Board

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Church World Service

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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

July 21, 2008

The Honorable John McCain/Barack Obama
Campaign Headquarters
Address

Dear Sen. McCain/Obama,

Peace between Israel and its neighbors is vitally important to the American Christians we represent as Board members of a coalition of 22 U.S. Catholic, Orthodox and Protestant national churches and church-related organizations. Our church members and congregations are deeply concerned over the longstanding conflict in the Holy Land and the welfare of all the peoples of the region. We are joined in this appeal to you by members of our Leadership Council, prominent individuals who each hold a particular expertise and connection to the Middle East.

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) urges you – as a candidate, and if you are elected President – to commit yourself publicly to making a two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict a top priority. Mideast peace efforts must not falter and will require the immediate attention of the next President and robust American diplomacy in the region.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is a tragic struggle between two proud peoples who have, thus far, been denied the blessings of peace and security. Both have been victims of tragedy and repeated wars and violence. Both sides have made serious mistakes. Neither one has fully grasped the suffering of the other. However, years of discussions and polls reveal that Israeli and Palestinian majorities are willing to make concessions for peace and understand that it can only be achieved through two states with secure and recognized borders, a withdrawal from settlements, and a Jerusalem that is shared by the two people and three faiths. Even the refugee issue is soluble in the context of a comprehensive regional agreement.

The respective interests of the two peoples are in fact interdependent. Both will continue to suffer without peace and security for Israel, and freedom, dignity and sovereignty for Palestinians. Additionally, we have a particular concern for the small, indigenous Palestinian Christian community. This historic community and their institutions play an important role in fostering a religiously diverse, pluralistic, and tolerant Palestinian society, but Christians are rapidly emigrating due to the difficult political and economic conditions imposed by the conflict. A durable and equitable peace agreement is essential for the future wellbeing of the Palestinian Christians and all the people of the Holy Land.

The United States has a key role to play in resolving this terrible conflict and needs to show understanding and provide support for both Israelis and Palestinians if we are to be effective. We urge you to rise above the polemical rhetoric that often characterizes political commentary on this conflict, ignore skeptics who proclaim that no agreement is possible, and to offer, as President, a policy that addresses the fundamental needs of both peoples.

Such American leadership is needed, not only as a moral imperative on behalf of suffering protagonists, but to safeguard long-term U.S. national security interests. This conflict helps shape attitudes towards the United States throughout the Arab and Muslim world and elsewhere. A just and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians, as well as between Israel and Syria and Israel and Lebanon, would help undercut support for extremist elements and bolster moderation in the region.

We know that a great many American Christians would respond very positively to your promise to make Israeli-Arab peace a high and urgent priority for your Administration. Moreover, based on our long experience and cooperation with other American religious communities, we are persuaded that you would find strong support in the American Jewish and American Muslim communities as well. For our part, we pledge to continue our work to build bi-partisan support in Congress for U.S. diplomatic engagement and look forward to working with the next President to help secure peace in the Middle East.

Respectfully yours,

Churches for Middle East Peace Board
Churches for Middle East Peace Leadership Council

(names and affiliations of signatories follow)

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