

Churches for Middle East Peace



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Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service
Committee

Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

Armenian Orthodox Church

Catholic Conference of Major
Superiors of Men's Institutes

Christian Church
(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

National Council of Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Reformed Church in America

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

June 29, 2006

C. David Welch
Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs
US Department of State
Fax: 202-736-4462

Dear Ambassador Welch,

Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) appeals to you to encourage the Administration to do everything possible to calm the crisis in Gaza. CMEP condemns the capture by Palestinian militants of Cpl. Gilad Shalit and prays that he will be released by Hamas without further delay and returned safely to his family.

CMEP urges the immediate intervention of the United States at the highest level with both Israeli and Palestinian officials. The mediating efforts of President Mubarak and the call by the foreign ministers, including Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, of the Group of Eight nations are important and appreciated, but this is not adequate. The United States, as Israel's closest ally, must work closely with Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Defense Minister Amir Peretz and insist that they restrain their military response and work with President Abbas to find a diplomatic resolution to the crisis.

The CMEP coalition of 21 Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and church-related organizations receives reports from Palestinian partner churches and agencies. The Middle East Council of Churches' Department of Services to Palestinian Refugees, in a June 29 update of the situation in Gaza, reports on the horrible impact of the military campaign on the people of Gaza. Israel's attack on civilian infrastructure in Gaza including disabling the only power plant in Gaza and destroying bridges are acts of collective punishment that have resulted in tremendous suffering by ordinary Palestinian people.

We appreciate you meeting with CMEP's director and Leadership Council members on June 20 and thank you for your attention to this appeal.

Sincerely,

The Executive Committee of Churches for Middle East Peace

Maureen Shea

Catherine Gordon

Jeanette Holt

Fr. Ted Keating, SM