

Churches for Middle East Peace



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Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service
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Antiochian Orthodox Christian
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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

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in America

Franciscan Friars (OFM)
English Speaking Conference,
JPIC Council

Friends Committee on National
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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

November 14, 2005

The Honorable Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Dr. Rice:

We write as leaders of a broad spectrum of churches and church-related organizations to encourage U.S. leadership toward a two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians, with Jerusalem as their shared capital. We believe that you and the President, working cooperatively with the Quartet, have the power to bring both sides to the negotiating table. The security of Israelis and Palestinians depends on this happening – as does our own. Like you, we have heard and seen how Israel's occupation of Palestinian land, and especially East Jerusalem, is used to incite terrorists around the world.

Renewal of the tragic cycle of violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza underscores the fact that this is a time of deep concern and of fragile hope. Both President Abbas and Prime Minister Sharon have taken significant steps toward peace. President Abbas has denounced violence in ways not matched by any other Palestinian leader and is seeking to build a credible democracy. Prime Minister Sharon has fulfilled his promise to withdraw settlers from the Gaza Strip. The United States must say clearly that these steps are beginnings, not ends. Any unilateral action, no matter how praiseworthy, only undermines the long term goal of a negotiated resolution that is durable and deemed to be legitimate.

We continue to believe that the President's vision of a viable, democratic state of Palestine living next to a secure Israel can be fulfilled, and we commend the Administration's recognition that Jerusalem is one of the final status issues that should not be prejudged. We urge you to ensure that Palestinians in East Jerusalem are able to participate fully in Palestinian legislative elections in January. The compliance of Israel to the President's insistence that building cease in the E1 area was a good sign. We are grateful that the Administration has continued to demand that settlement activity cease, and disappointed that Israel has ignored that request and other requirements of the Road Map.

Hope is difficult to sustain as Israel continues to block the movement of Palestinian people and goods. It is fundamentally important for both Israelis and Palestinians that a future Palestinian state is economically viable, and we applaud the efforts by envoy James Wolfensohn in that regard.

We are heartened by the fact that strong majorities of both Israelis and Palestinians support peace efforts and a two-state solution. We find strong support from our own members for the peace efforts as well. Our Washington-based staff report Congressional readiness for bipartisan support of an active, sustained push for peace. This convergence of opinion presents an opportunity that must not be missed.

We cannot emphasize enough the significance of this moment and the imperative of U.S. leadership. There is much to build on from previous efforts and nothing to be gained from further postponement. We offer our support and assistance, as well as our prayers, as you work toward resolution of this conflict and the building of bridges between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples and the Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Dr. Stan Hastey
Executive Director
Alliance of Baptists

Mary Ellen McNish
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Metropolitan PHILIP (Saliba)
Archbishop of NY and
Metropolitan of North America
Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

Bishop Vicken Aykazian
Legate
Armenian Orthodox Church

Very Reverend Dominic Izzo, OP
President
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Rev. Sharon E. Watkins
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Rev. John H. Thomas
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Bishop Peter Weaver
President
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