

Churches for Middle East Peace



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American Friends Service
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Armenian Orthodox Church

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Common Global Ministries Board

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Mennonite Central Committee

Moravian Church in America

National Council of Churches

Presbyterian Church (USA)

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Common Global Ministries Board

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

January 23, 2008

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

Dear Madam Secretary,

We write to you today with great concern about the recent escalation of violence in and around Gaza. Rocket attacks against Israel by Palestinian militant groups and retaliatory responses by Israel that include the cutoff or the threat of cutoff of vital food, fuel, electricity and adequate access to medical attention for the residents of Gaza are creating an untenable situation that threatens to derail the nascent but vitally important peace process. Neither the rocket attacks nor imposed suffering on the general population of Gaza can be justified. Today's breach of the Gaza-Egypt border only underscores the urgency of this current crisis that risks continued escalation.

We welcome your January 22nd statement calling on both sides not only to reduce the violence but also to start to think more creatively about how to address the current situation in Gaza, perhaps by giving the Palestinian Authority a greater role at the border crossings as suggested by Prime Minister Fayyad, an idea endorsed by the Quartet and called for by the Patriarchs and Heads of Local Christian Churches in Jerusalem. We urge your concerted diplomatic effort now, together with Egypt and the international community, to help bring about a ceasefire and avert a further humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

Progress towards a viable Palestinian state living at peace alongside a secure Israel as called for by the President will require wise management of the current Gaza crisis to help lay the groundwork for a united Palestinian polity capable of implementing a durable peace. We offer our prayers and support for your urgent action to ensure that the diplomatic process begun at the Annapolis conference and continued with your and President Bush's visit to the region this month can succeed.

Sincerely,

Warren Clark
Executive Director

Maureen Shea
Chair of the Board