

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

Moravian Church in America

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

October 15, 2007

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

Dear Secretary Rice,

Thank you for organizing an international meeting dedicated to progress on a peace agreement that would end the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant churches and agencies, is urging members of Congress to promise bipartisan support for the President's diplomatic initiative. Your bold leadership, with the strong backing of President Bush, can create momentum for continued progress and movement toward the creation of a viable democratic state of Palestine alongside Israel, each sovereign and secure. Now is the time to build on the promise and potential of the Arab League Initiative and encourage the participation of its signers.

Clearly the situation on the ground discourages both leaders and ordinary people in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories as well as international observers. We ask that you, in preparation for the conference, press hard for concrete steps by Israeli and Palestinian leaders to improve conditions, including securing a ceasefire and facilitating the movement of Palestinian goods and people. The generosity of international donors is necessary but insufficient. The Palestinian private sector needs to be able to function for real economic development and job creation to take place and generate hope. As we all know, a healthy Palestinian economy is in the best interests of Israel as well.

The current division in Palestinian governance must not be allowed to thwart the success of the meeting in Annapolis and those that follow. We agree with you that there is one Palestinian people and there should be one Palestinian state and urge you to ensure that Palestinians in Gaza can also find hope in a political solution.

Many observers are making recommendations about a statement or declaration of principles that addresses the final status issues. Churches for Middle East Peace has a particular interest in a resolution of the status of Jerusalem that would allow both Israelis and Palestinians to claim the city as their capital, and for Jews, Christians and Muslims to fully enjoy the profound religious significance of the holy city and its holy sites. While many of the fruits of

peace will require considerable time to be evident, small changes in Jerusalem would provide hopeful evidence that the two-state vision will actually become reality. As an example, the United States could launch USAID projects to improve daily lives of Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

It is a grim lesson from the past that violent acts by extremists can be allowed to undermine progress made by peacemakers and public support for peace. We appeal to you to lead all parties to declare that peacemaking is unstoppable, and that violent extremists will not be allowed to achieve their political objectives of disrupting the peace process.

For our part Churches for Middle East Peace will work to generate support among the clergy and members of our churches for your efforts and will encourage congregations across the country to pray for the peace of Jerusalem and for the compassionate wisdom and bold courage that all political leaders in this momentous initiative will need.

Sincerely,

Bishop Wayne Burkette
Moravian Church in America

Jim Fine
Legislative Secretary for Foreign Policy
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Dennis W. Frado
Director, Lutheran Office for World Community
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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