

February 2, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are Christian leaders deeply committed to building a just peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We also share a concern for our Christian companions, who are constantly working for the good of all in the region. Therefore, we believe that the United States must now respond positively to the resolution on Israeli settlement construction activity and related issues that soon may be considered in the UN Security Council. The draft resolution, introduced this week, uses language regarding the settlements employed by the U.S. in the past, and refers to undertakings on settlement construction agreed to in the past by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States, though not implemented. The resolution also stresses the importance of improving the situation on the ground and building confidence between the parties, a value that should be shared by all persons of good will.

We disagree with the assertion that this resolution should not go forward because it would undercut a negotiated settlement. The expansion of Israeli infrastructure into the West Bank continues despite U.S. requests for restraint and generous U.S. offers of security and political assistance.

We fear that lack of positive U.S. support for this resolution will increase political despondency, thus amplifying the voices of extremists on both sides of this conflict. Such developments could threaten the recent real advances in the governing capacity of the Palestinian Authority.

Most importantly from our perspective, we believe the U.S. should support this resolution as a reassertion of our moral authority in the region and as a demonstration of our resolve to reach a final status agreement as soon as feasible. We are convinced that these goals can be achieved while advancing important interests of the United States and the wider international community.

In the interest of a just, lasting, and comprehensive peace, we ask that you support this resolution being brought to the UN Security Council for debate and that the U.S. vote affirmatively when it is considered.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

The Rev. Gradye Parsons
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)

continued,

Marie Dennis
Director
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Jonathan W. Evans
Legislative Representative for Foreign Policy
Friends Committee on National Legislation

The Rev. Wesley Granberg-Michaelson
General Secretary
Reformed Church in America

Stanley J. Noffsinger
General Secretary
Church of the Brethren

The Rev. Dr. Sharon E. Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

Shan Cretin
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

J. Ron Byler
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.

The Rev. Dr. Michael Kinnamon
General Secretary
National Council of the Churches of Christ
in the U.S.A.

The Rev. Geoffrey Black
General Minister and President
United Church of Christ

Bishop Deborah Lieder Kiesey, President
General Board of Church and Society
The United Methodist Church

The Rev. John L. McCullough
Executive Director and CEO
Church World Service

cc: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton, Secretary of State
The Honorable Susan E. Rice, U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations