

Churches for Middle East Peace



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August 7, 2009

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary,

We are writing to express our grave concern about the eviction of 50 Palestinians from their homes in the Sheikh Jarrah section of East Jerusalem in the early morning hours of August 2, 2009. Witnesses reported that almost immediately Israeli settlers moved into the houses to replace the Palestinians.

The houses in question were built in the 1950s during the period of Jordanian administration of East Jerusalem. While the legal issues in the case are disputed, it is clear that carrying out this eviction order at this time is provocative. We thank you and deeply appreciate your statement of August 3 that "eviction of families...in East Jerusalem is not in keeping with Israeli obligations."

This population substitution is clearly designed to continue efforts to expand Israeli presence and control over Palestinian areas of East Jerusalem. This action took place in the sensitive Sheikh Jarrah section of East Jerusalem close to the 1949 Armistice Line or Green Line. A home eviction order at this time and in this place is not a mere matter of local law enforcement, but raises significant international political issues. It contradicts terms of the Road Map brokered by the United States and agreed to by both Israeli and Palestinian representatives to refrain from activities that could undermine progress towards a peace agreement. It also undercuts U.S. efforts to create an environment for starting talks for a comprehensive peace agreement and is therefore harmful to both the Palestinians and Israelis hopes for peace.

For these reasons a U.S. response that is limited to official protests is not sufficient. We urge the Department of State to insist on the immediate reversal of this ill-considered eviction and on the restoration of these houses to their former residents.

Yours most sincerely,

Continued on page 2

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