

June 27, 2011

Dear Mr. President,

As Christian leaders we strongly support your May 19 call for progress in bringing about an agreement to end the conflict between Israelis and Palestinians. You made important and helpful proposals concerning the issues of borders and security as a basis for negotiations.

Visible additional steps by you and your Administration are needed now more than ever to keep the parties focused on making concrete progress. We are deeply concerned that without further U.S. initiatives, together with the international community, the current impasse will continue and further violence could make an acceptable agreement harder to achieve.

Time is not on the side of peace; therefore, we believe your next step should be a comprehensive statement in collaboration with the Middle East Quartet and others, prior to the beginning of the UN General Assembly this fall, that addresses all final status issues, including the need for Jerusalem in the future to be the shared capital of both states, a just resolution to the issue of all refugees, and assured access for all faiths to their holy places.

With a clear path toward a solution and broad international support, the parties involved will be better able to overcome their fears and mistrust in order to focus on how to achieve a lasting resolution to this conflict. Only then can a secure and democratic Israel and a viable Palestinian state be assured.

There are of course other concerns, but they should not be allowed to interfere with making real progress towards an agreement on borders, security, Jerusalem and refugees.

Like Jesus' parable about the persistent widow who kept on demanding justice over and over again until justice was received (Luke 18: 1-8), we hope that you will keep insisting over and over again that all parties keep up the hard work of reconciliation until a just and lasting peace is achieved.

Sincerely yours,

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