

Dear Secretary Hillary Clinton, Governor Garry Johnson, Dr. Jill Stein, and Mr. Donald Trump,

As American church leaders we are writing to you and other candidates for President of the United States in the upcoming November election to express our deep concern about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the Israeli military occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza, now in its 50<sup>th</sup> year. We ask that during the coming political campaign that you pledge, if elected, to take urgent and vigorous new steps to seek creative political solutions that will foster a just and lasting peace and help each party to realize self-determination with necessary confidence building measures to build mutual security.

We lament the violence perpetrated by both Israelis and Palestinians. Both sides have engaged in incitement. Both sides live in mutual fear. Ongoing settlement expansion that has led to 570,000 Israelis living in East Jerusalem and the West Bank is eroding the viability of the two-state solution. The blockade of Gaza has led to immense human suffering. This status quo is clearly contrary to global security interests, including those of the U.S., and a source of violent extremism throughout the region. In addition, the daily indignities and stresses of the occupation foster human suffering and have led to emigration from the small but vital Palestinian Christian community.

Only Israelis and Palestinians themselves can decide upon the details of a lasting and just peace agreement. However, given the imbalance of power and history of deep mutual distrust, there will not be progress toward an agreement unless other steps also are taken. Because of its power and influence, the US has a special responsibility for leadership, in cooperation with Europeans and interested Arab states, to move the two sides toward an agreement which will remove this source of conflict once and for all.

As an urgent first step, we hope you will speak forcefully and provide the leadership of your office, if elected, to call openly for an end of violence and settlement expansion. Almost 50 years of occupation have and will continue to erode the soul of both the occupied and the occupier. To ease tensions, we urge you to support people-to-people exchanges and the end of practices under the occupation that result in major human rights abuses, such as home demolitions, systematic land seizures, travel restrictions, the blockade of Gaza, and indefinite administrative detention, including detention of persons under eighteen.

We pray that, as you look forward to the heavy burdens of leadership, you will find the wisdom, strength and persistence to seek new avenues toward a just and durable peace for Israelis and Palestinians alike.

Very respectfully,

Bishop Oscar Cantú  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace  
U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

Archbishop of Oklahoma City Paul S. Coakley  
Chairman of the Board  
Catholic Relief Services

The Most Rev. Michael B. Curry  
Presiding Bishop and Primate  
The Episcopal Church

Rev. Dr. John C. Dorhauer  
General Minister and President  
United Church of Christ

The Rev. Elizabeth A. Eaton  
Presiding Bishop  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rev. Jim Greenfield, OSFS  
President  
Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Rev. Julia Brown Karimu  
Co-Executive  
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of  
Christ) and the United Church of Christ

Reverend John L. McCullough  
President and CEO  
Church World Service

Rev. Dr. Elizabeth D. Miller  
President  
Moravian Church Northern Province

Rev. Dr. James A Moos  
Executive Minister, Wider Church Ministries, Co-  
Executive Global Ministries  
United Church of Christ

Very Reverend Kevin Mullen, OFM  
Vice-Chair  
English Speaking Conference, Franciscan Friars (OFM)

Rev. Dr. J. Herbert Nelson  
Stated Clerk of the General Assembly  
Presbyterian Church (USA)

Bishop Bruce R. Ough  
President, Council of Bishops  
The United Methodist Church

Diane Randall  
Executive Secretary  
Friends Committee on National Legislation

Sr. Joan Marie Steadman, CSC  
Executive Director  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Rev. Dr. Ervin R. Stutzman  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Church USA

Dr. Steven Timmermans  
Executive Director  
Christian Reformed Church in North America

Dr. Leanne Van Dyk  
President  
Columbia Theological Seminary

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

Jim Winkler  
President and General Secretary  
National Council of Churches