



WARREN CLARK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Churches
for
MIDDLE EAST PEACE

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AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES
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AMERICAN FRIENDS SERVICE
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CHRISTIAN ARCHDIOCESE OF
NORTH AMERICA
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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON
NATIONAL LEGISLATION
GREEK ORTHODOX ARCHDIOCESE
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MARYKNOLL MISSIONERS
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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

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President,

We believe the current upheaval in the Arab world both reveals God's desire for the liberation of all people from oppression (Psalm 146.7) and presents an opportunity to support moral values in advancing human rights.

In this connection, we wish to express our regret that the United States vetoed the resolution in the United Nations Security Council February 18 reaffirming that Israeli settlements activities in the Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem, are illegal.

While we appreciate statements affirming continuing U.S. strong opposition to the expansion of Israeli settlements, these must be followed by concrete measures to halt this activity. We believe bold and immediate new steps are needed now to prevent this veto from further damaging America's credibility as a broker to help resolve this conflict that threatens the security of both peoples and denies self-determination to Palestinians.

Negotiations to end this conflict have foundered not just because of remaining differences over the specific issues, but also because of deep fear and mistrust. Both sides need to have confidence that any agreement for a just peace with security will be lasting and reliably executed in a reasonable timeframe.

We call upon you therefore to open up broad new channels of diplomatic effort to encourage both sides to take responsibility now for creating the conditions necessary for talks to succeed. This initiative must necessarily include support from the Middle East Quartet, the Arab League and the Organization of the Islamic Conference for a set of proposals, building on the Arab Peace Initiative. The concerns of persons displaced over the years by the conflict should be addressed. Neighbors and powers in the

region should be engaged no matter what their current relations with Israel.

With rapid change underway in the Arab world we believe that the time to act is now -- before events make the task of reaching an agreement more difficult. The Quartet recently expressed support for concluding an agreement between Israelis and Palestinians by this September, and you also have expressed the hope there can be an agreement by then.

With that time frame in mind, we hope that you and the other Quartet leaders will travel to the region together soon, visiting Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring Syria, to propose specific steps to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace between Israel and all its neighbors.

We believe an interim agreement at this time would be folly. We have seen that stagnation in this peace process can be explosive. We appeal to you to initiate these bold actions now to help bring about resolution of all final status issues and a definitive end to this conflict. Only then can peace, healing and reconciliation of neighbors for which we all pray be achieved, so that all involved may have life more abundantly.

Sincerely,

Archbishop Khajag Barsamian
Primate of the Armenian Church
Eastern Diocese

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

J Ron Byler
Executive Director
Mennonite Central Committee

Very Rev. Thomas P. Cassidy, SCJ
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English Speaking Conference JPIC

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson

Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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Leadership Conference of Women Religious

Rev. Gradye Parsons

Stated Clerk of the General Assembly
Presbyterian Church (USA)

His Eminence Metropolitan Philip

Archbishop of New York and Metropolitan
of all North American
Self-Ruled Antiochian Orthodox Christian
Archdiocese of North America

Diane Randall

Executive Secretary
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