



WARREN CLARK
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Churches
for
MIDDLE EAST PEACE

June 29, 2015

Dear Mr. President,

It is in Christian hope and love of all our Israeli and Palestinian neighbors that we write to you this day. Our organization, Churches for Middle East Peace, is a coalition of 22 national Christian denominations and organizations -- Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, and Evangelical -- that conducts education and advocacy on Israeli-Palestinian issues in support of a just, lasting and comprehensive resolution to this conflict with a secure Israel and a viable, contiguous Palestine. We believe an end of the hardship imposed by the 48-year old occupation will be important for the preservation of the small but vibrant Christian Palestinian community as well as for the prosperity of all Israelis and Palestinians.

We pray that negotiations with Iran regarding its nuclear program will conclude successfully this summer. We hope you will then turn your attention to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, acting to end what you once called a "Kabuki dance".

We believe an opportunity for far-reaching change will present itself with the resolution that France has said it plans to introduce into the United Nations Security Council later this year that will include a framework and timeline for negotiations. If these are not concluded by a certain date, France has indicated it plans to recognize the Palestinian state. We urge you to consult with the parties involved with a view of voting affirmatively on a resolution with these parameters.

Your administration insists that the only acceptable resolution to this conflict is a two-state solution. Yet, negotiations about territory cannot continue with integrity while one party continues absorbing the territory of the other. We urge your administration therefore to make clear that the U.S. views Israeli settlements in occupied Palestine not merely as "illegitimate" and "foolish," as it has already said, but also "illegal."

The U.S. should certainly not be acting to support settlements. We urge your administration to clearly reject language in bills now passed or pending in the Congress that deliberately includes settlements in measures designed to support Israel.

In this connection we hope you will make clear that the US considers Israeli expropriations of Palestinian lands by declaring them "State Land" — as it did recently near the village of Wadi Fukin and elsewhere — are contrary to international conventions and law relating to occupation.

Mr. President, we appreciate that you have struggled to seek a resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict from the beginning of your first term over six years ago. It is now clear that the parties themselves cannot be expected to make real progress towards an agreement unless they have strong reasons to do so.

We continue to pray for all the sons and daughters of the God of Abraham who suffer — both as the occupied and the occupier--and we pray for you in the challenging times ahead.

Sincerely,

Warren Clark
Executive Director

Russ Testa
Board Chair