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Letter from Heads of Denominations to President Obama on Restart of Direct Talks (August 30, 2010)

August 30, 2010

Dear Mr. President,

As leaders of American Christian faith communities deeply concerned with the need to end the long-standing conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, we are pleased with the success of your diplomacy in bringing the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority together in Washington September 1-2 to restart direct negotiations aimed at reaching an agreement on final status issues within the coming year. We fully support your goal of ending the occupation that began in 1967 and achieving a just, lasting and comprehensive peace with a viable Palestinian state living side by side with Israel in peace and security. [./letters/2010_Letters/Letter to the President 083010.pdf](#)

At the same time we have no illusions about the difficulty of the task ahead. Both sides hold deep convictions contrary to those held by the other. Although many issues have been clarified in past negotiations, major compromises by both sides will be needed at considerable political risk and cost. Without your help it seems unlikely that an agreement can be reached. Time is short. If an agreement is not reached within the coming year, it may not be reachable at all.

For that reason we call on you and your negotiating team to continue your vigilant efforts to help the parties find acceptable solutions. We are heartened by the statement of Senator George Mitchell that he will remain closely involved in the negotiations. The U.S. will need to empower both sides to take risks for peace and when necessary to make proposals to bridge remaining differences. The United States must be clear that actions or words by either side in the coming year that undermine confidence in the negotiations, incite disrespect or prejudice the outcome of final status issues will not be tolerated.

In support of this effort, we pledge to maintain and expand our dialogue on this issue with American Jewish and Palestinian communities and to assure them of our steadfast support for achieving the aspirations of both Israel and the Palestinian people for peace and security.

Mr. President, we are praying for you as you seek to bring God's justice and peace to a place torn by walls and weapons. We are convinced that with your vigilant support this dream can be fulfilled, and the lives of Palestinians and Israelis, as well as U.S. national security interests, can be transformed for the better.

Sincerely,

Archbishop Vicken Aykazian
Armenian Orthodox Church

Jimmy R. Allen
Coordinator
New Baptist Covenant

Dr. Ray Bakke
Chancellor

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

Bishop Wayne Burkett
Moravian Church in America

J. Ron Byler
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Very Rev. Thomas Cassidy, SCJ
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Rev. Mark S. Hanson
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Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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