

September 30, 2011

**U.S. Christian Leaders Response to the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem
On the Palestinian Application to be a Member State of the United Nations**

We received your “Communiqué from the Heads of Christian Churches in Jerusalem” and affirm the principles outlined in your statement. We continue to hear and heed your call to “intensify the prayers and diplomatic efforts for peace between Palestinians and Israelis.”

As Christian leaders in the United States engaged in relationships with Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities in this country and the Holy Land, we are concerned for the future of all people living in Israel and Palestine. Our churches have long been engaged in efforts to support actions and policies that promote the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the stability of the entire Middle East region. We have come to understand that neither conflict resolution nor stability can be achieved without simultaneously pursuing justice, a conviction also borne out by the events known collectively as the ‘Arab Spring.’

We recognize the complex and difficult situation regarding the current and future realities of the Middle East. It is impossible to know with certainty what political directions will be taken and how the people directly affected by those political decisions will respond. Regardless, as Christian leaders because of the unity we share through our baptism, our primary concern is with the people and not self-serving national interests. We recognize, however, that public policy decisions will greatly impact Palestinian and Israeli lives as well as our own. Therefore, we must speak out against policies which do not serve the cause of peace and justice.

Our churches have spoken plainly and repeatedly for the recognition of the Palestinian’s right to self determination and an end to the Israeli illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory as a result of war in 1967. For nearly two decades, the end of this occupation has been entrusted to a peace process, led by the United States, which has had the effect of continual expansion of illegal settlement activities, even during periods of direct negotiations. It is understandable, therefore, that Palestinian leaders have rejected this pattern which has rendered a two-state solution more and more difficult.

As Christian leaders, we continue to resolutely reject the use of violence by any party to the conflict. Furthermore, we have a strong and enduring commitment to Jerusalem as a shared city, a secure state of Israel and a viable, contiguous Palestinian state. Relevant UN Security Council resolutions, such as 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), must be fully implemented.

As Christian leaders in the United States, we are dismayed that the Obama administration has actively opposed Palestinian efforts to achieve a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through appeal to the United Nations. We recall that it was this body which proposed the partition in 1947 that led to the creation of the state of Israel the next

year. This body has also been the focus for decisions which the United States has either initiated or been an affirming party. We are concerned U.S. opposition to Palestinian efforts at the United Nations will be perceived as a callous rejection of the Palestinian right of self-determination, further damaging relationships at all levels in the Middle East and around the world, and leading to further conflict and strife.

Together with you, we will continue to advocate to our respective governments and engage the international community in multilateral efforts, such as those undertaken through the United Nations or at Madrid in 1991, to work for peace between Israel and Palestine as well as with other nations in the region.

*“Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering,
for he who has promised is faithful.” (Hebrews 10:23)*

In God’s Grace,

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