

National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

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May, 2011

President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President,

We are leaders of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious organizations who supported your commitment to make Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace a high priority from the start of your presidency. Following our April 14 letter and Secretary of State Clinton's response on your behalf, reiterating your Administration's commitment to seek peace, we write again to offer our united support for urgently needed strong U.S. leadership, in coordination with the Quartet, to press for agreement on a two-state peace agreement before it is too late. If the opportunity for a two-state solution is missed, there almost inevitably will be renewed violent conflict with more suffering for Israelis and Palestinians, and increased dangers of extremism.

The recent Israeli Peace Initiative presented by former Israeli government, intelligence and security officials, the earlier Arab Peace Initiative, and the Geneva Accord, taken together, offer key principles and ideas for achieving comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. We urge you to visit Jerusalem and the region soon to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to restart negotiations focused on the principles and ideas in these initiatives.

We believe the United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should continue to respond carefully to the new Palestinian unity agreement and not act precipitously to cut off aid that is essential for humanitarian purposes and for building the capacity of a future Palestinian state. While the agreement is helpful in forming a government capable of representing the West Bank and Gaza together, the involvement of Hamas raises questions about the unity government's commitment to reject violence and negotiate a two-state peace agreement with Israel. We believe the United States should insist on these commitments.

We pledge our prayers and public support for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership in pursuing peace. We will urge Congress to be constructive. We believe that, in exercising strong U.S. leadership for peace, you can count on substantial support from members of churches, synagogues, and mosques across the country.

cc: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton
National Security Advisor Tom Donilon
Members of Congress

(See next page for list of endorsers)

CHRISTIAN LEADERS

His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington *

Bishop Howard Hubbard, Chairman, International Committee, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops*

Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, Director, Ecumenical Affairs, Armenia Orthodox Church in America*

Fr. Mark Arey, Director, Ecumenical Officer, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America*

The Reverend Peg Chamberlin, President, National Council of Churches of Christ USA *

The Reverend Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, National Council of Churches of Christ USA*

Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*

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The Reverend Geoffrey Black, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ*

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)*

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)*

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The Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US*

Richard J. Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary*

David Neff, Editor in Chief and Vice-President, Christianity Today*

The Reverend John M. Buchanan, Editor and Publisher, Christian Century*

JEWISH LEADERS

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Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Executive Vice President Emeritus, Central Conference of American Rabbis*

Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, Vice President, A Different Future*

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Rector, American Jewish University*

Rabbi Burton Visotzky, Professor of Midrash & Interreligious Studies, Jewish Theological Seminary*

Rabbi Freddi Cooper, President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly*

Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Director of Congregational Services, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation*

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MUSLIM LEADERS

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Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President, Islamic Society of North America*

Naeem Baig, Executive Director, Islamic Circle of North America*

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Eide Alawan, Interfaith Office for Outreach, Islamic Center of America*