



**Office of the Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America**

September 19, 2011

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I write to you as a Christian leader committed to seeking a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Our Church's relationship with our Christian companions in the region provides me with a constant and troubling awareness of the daily suffering that persists because of the failure to resolve the conflict.

At this important juncture, the U.S. has a new opportunity to demonstrate its support for self-determination and freedom by not standing in the way of the Palestinian application for admission as a Member State of the United Nations.

The objective of the initiative at the United Nations is to achieve a two-state solution, an objective we share with your administration. We agree with your statement to the UN last year that those who seek such a solution "... should reach for what's best within ourselves. If we do, when we come back here next year, we can have an agreement that will lead to a new member of the United Nations -- an independent, sovereign state of Palestine, living in peace with Israel." Even so, in the absence of direct negotiations, it is reasonable that the Palestinians and others are turning to the international forum of the UN in an effort to finally realize the goal of an independent Palestinian state.

It is my hope the U.S. will act in its own best interest as well as the interest of all people in the region by not blocking the initiative to admit Palestine as a Member State of the United Nations.

Thank you for your consideration. My prayers are with you and all who work for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

In God's grace,

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

MSH:glw

Cc: The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State

The Honorable Susan E. Rice
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations

Mr. Denis McDonough
Deputy National Security Advisor to the President