

**National Interreligious Leadership Initiative
for Peace in the Middle East**

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July 26, 2013

The Honorable Robert Menedez
Chair, Foreign Relations Committee
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Menedez,

We write as members of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), including present and past heads of national denominations and faith organizations. We support the President's commitment to make Israeli-Palestinian peace a high priority of U.S. Policy. Recognizing that the passage of time makes achieving a viable two-state solution increasingly difficult, we strongly support Secretary of State Kerry's determined initiative for peace.

We warmly welcome Secretary Kerry's announcement on July 19 that agreement has been reached "that establishes the basis for resuming direct final status negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis." Looking forward, we appreciate that over the years there has been intermittent progress toward resolving final status issues in both unofficial talks and formal negotiations. While none of these talks and negotiations have yet to yield a blueprint for peace, taken together, they have identified ideas for addressing key issues that must be resolved in a manner acceptable to both sides. We hope you will support Secretary Kerry's continuing urgent efforts for peace.

As Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders, we are committed to mobilizing broad public support for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership for peace. We offer our prayers for Secretary Kerry's efforts and we are prepared through the national organizations we represent to activate members of synagogues, churches and mosques across the country to support bold American leadership.

We know the path to peace is complex and challenging, but peace is possible. We pledge our support and would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss specific ways we can help.

List of Endorsers follows

Christian Leaders:

Bishop Richard E. Pates, D.D., Chairman, USCCB Committee on International Justice and Peace
Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington
Bishop Denis J. Madden, Auxiliary Bishop of Baltimore
Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, Director, Ecumenical Affairs, Armenian Orthodox Church in America
Fr. Mark Arey, Director, Office of Ecumenical Affairs, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America
Kathryn Mary Lohre, President, National Council of Churches of Christ USA
Bishop Mark S. Hanson, Presiding Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Most Rev. Dr. Katharine Jefferts Schori, Presiding Bishop and Primate, Episcopal Church
Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Reverend Geoffrey Black, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ
Reverend Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)
Bishop Mary Ann Swenson, Council of Bishops, United Methodist Church
Richard Stearns, President, World Vision US
Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US
David Neff, Former Editorial Vice-President, Christianity Today

Jewish Leaders:

Rabbi Richard J. Jacobs, President, Union of Reform Judaism
Rabbi Richard A. Block, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis
Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Ph.D. Rector and Distinguished Professor of Philosophy, American Jewish University
Rabbi Burton L. Visotzky, Professor, Jewish Theological Seminary of America
Rabbi Peter Knobel, Past President, Central Conference of American Rabbis
Rabbi Amy Small, Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association
Rabbi Alvin M. Sugarman, Rabbi Emeritus, The Temple, Atlanta, Georgia

Muslim Leaders:

Imam Mohammed Magid, President, Islamic Society of North America
Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America
Naeem Baig, President, Islamic Circle of North America
Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University
Dawud Assad, President Emeritus, Council of Mosques, USA
Eide Alawan, Interfaith Office for Outreach, Islamic Center of America, Dearborn, Michigan
Iftekhhar A. Hai, Founding Director, United Muslims of America Interfaith Alliance
Organizations for Identification Only