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Home > News > Middle East and Europe

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Heads of Churches write to President Obama on Israeli Settlements

April 6, 2010

[The following letter was sent to the White House on Monday, April 5.]

April 5, 2010

Dear Mr. President,

As leaders of major Christian faith communities in America we write to express our strong support for your Administration's bold efforts to restart negotiations aimed at a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land. We applaud your efforts to halt settlement construction in East Jerusalem and elsewhere in the Palestinian territories, and we join you in seeking a comprehensive agreement that ends the occupation, provides security and recognition for Israel, and establishes a viable, secure and independent Palestinian state.

We believe that with your strong leadership these negotiations can lead to an accord soon that ends the conflict and achieves both the Palestinian goal of an independent, secure and viable state and Israel's goal of a secure state with recognized borders.

New construction or settlement expansion in East Jerusalem and the West Bank undermines the mutual trust that is a necessary condition for successful negotiations. In this regard, the announcement of March 9 for new housing in East Jerusalem is unacceptable. The expansion of settlements endangers efforts to start the proximity talks that are to be the first step towards direct negotiations on all final status issues that include borders, refugees, security, and a shared Jerusalem.

We cannot permit the benefits of reconciliation and peace to be undermined by fear. Continued violence only strengthens rejectionists on both sides. We also condemn therefore all violence such as that which led to four Palestinian deaths recently in the West Bank and a rogue rocket attack that killed a worker in southern Israel. Authorities on both sides must take steps to avoid provocations and maintain order.

This is an important moment in the struggle to end the occupation and achieve a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land – a restoration of right relationships that will allow Israel and the Palestinians to live in peace with each other and their neighbors.

Continuing U.S. involvement –with necessary support from the U.S. Congress and U.S. public opinion—will be needed to help both sides resolve complex issues. We pledge to give you every possible support in this effort and to join with our Jewish and Muslim colleagues to help work for that goal.

Sincerely,

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

Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins
General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)

[Click here for a printable version of the letter and the full list of heads of communion who signed.]

For More Information
Peter Makari