

June 9, 2009



**SUPPORT BOLD ACTION FOR  
PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND:  
SIGN AN ECUMENICAL LETTER  
TO PRESIDENT OBAMA  
SUPPORTING STRONG U.S.  
PEACEMAKING EFFORTS NOW**

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Visit the Action Center (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>) now and make a bold move in support of peace in the Middle East [by signing this ecumenical letter](#) to President Obama, also signed by Most Reverend Howard Hubbard, Bishop of Albany and Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) and Ken Hackett, President, Catholic Relief Services (CRS) that states: "There is no greater work than the Psalmist's call to "seek peace and pursue it" and no more critical time than now to finally end the conflict in the Holy Land (Ps. 34:14)."

**WHY IS BOLD ACTION FOR PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND CRITICAL NOW?** President Obama has made a series of strong statements recently urging Israel and the Palestinians to take actions for peace and challenged all of us to work towards a "Holy Land of three great faiths" that is "the place of peace that God intended it to be; when Jerusalem is a secure and lasting home for Jews and Christians and Muslims." It is critical now for the Catholic community in the United States to demonstrate our strong support for the President's efforts to help bring peace to the Holy Land. The opportunity for achieving a two-state solution is supported by majorities of Israelis and Palestinians as the best way to end this tragic conflict. However, the prospects for this solution are narrowing and must be seized soon.

**WHAT DOES THE LETTER ASK PRESIDENT-ELECT OBAMA TO DO?** The letter we are asking you to sign was circulated by the *Churches for Middle East Peace* ([www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org)), an ecumenical coalition of churches and faith-based organizations with which CRS and USCCB collaborate. The letter recognizes President Obama's efforts to address the issue of peace between Israel and the Palestinians, encourages bold action by the administration and urges him "to provide a clear framework for an end to the conflict, help Israelis and Palestinians make the difficult decisions necessary to achieve lasting peace, and hold both parties to account when they fail to honor their commitments."

More than 50 Catholic, Evangelical, Protestant, and Orthodox faith leaders have signed this letter to President Obama, including several other Bishops, the Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, Leadership Conference of Women Religious, Franciscan Action Network, the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, and Pax Christi USA, declaring their support "for robust U.S. peacemaking efforts and to call for meaningful progress to achieve a just and lasting two-state peace." You can make a difference, too. [Please sign the letter now](#) and encourage your family, friends, school, parish, organization or others to sign it as well.

**WHAT DOES PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND HAVE TO DO WITH MY FAITH?** Our Catholic faith teaches us to be peacemakers. The U.S. Bishops wrote in *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*, "Peacemaking is not an optional commitment. It is a requirement of our faith. We are called to be peacemakers, not by some movement of the moment, but by our Lord Jesus." Our Holy Father, Pope Benedict XVI, has called on the international community to help Israelis and Palestinians to discard the "dead end" of violence and pursue instead "the path of dialogue and negotiations." Upon leaving the Holy Land recently, he also expressed this plea: "Let the two-state solution become a reality, not remain a dream."

**WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DOING TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND?** The USCCB has been part of an unprecedented interreligious initiative that engages Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders and communities within the United States in a coordinated effort to promote a just peace in the Middle East. [Catholic Relief Services](#) (CRS) has worked in the Holy Land for nearly half a century, supporting peace with justice for all people, while responding to the humanitarian and sustainable development needs of Palestinians.

Together, USCCB and CRS are encouraging Catholics to advocate for stronger U.S. leadership to hold both parties to the conflict accountable in building a just peace through the [Catholics Confront Global Poverty](#) initiative. We also support U.S. funding for the Palestinian Authority to increase its ability to govern and build its capacity for a future state as well as for urgently needed humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.

**For more information contact:**

Dr. Stephen Colecchi, Director, International Justice and Peace, USCCB, [scolecchi@usccb.org](mailto:scolecchi@usccb.org), (202) 541-3196  
Tina Rodousakis, Grassroots Advocacy Manager, CRS, [troudousa@crs.org](mailto:troudousa@crs.org); (410) 951-7462