

Middle East Network Newsletter

October 22, 2009

Bishops' Letter to the President on Middle East Peace: Add your voice today!

Fifty-eight ELCA bishops wrote to President Obama on October 13, 2009 to underscore the urgency of a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians. Citing the ELCA's relationship with Palestinian Christians in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and the Lutheran World Federation, the bishops said, "These commitments lead us to write to you at this critical juncture to express our conviction that now is the time for bold U.S. leadership." The bishops expressed concern at the current stalemate and "at the fading hopes for a two-state solution due to the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem." They wrote, "We urge the U.S. to insist upon an end to the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land as well as an end to Palestinian violence against Israelis." The letter also calls for alleviating conditions in Gaza resulting from border closures. A copy of the letter was sent to all members of Congress.

Let your elected officials know that constituents share these concerns and commitments. Contact the [White House](#), your [representative](#), and your [senators](#): Call attention to the bishops' letter and add your message of support for U.S. leadership to achieve a just peace now. Let your leaders know they are in your prayers and, as the letter states, "we hold fast to the hope that this region of turmoil can be a land where all of God's children dwell in peace."

To read the bishops' letter, [click here](#).

For ELCA news coverage of the bishops' letter, [click here](#).

Christian leaders and others issue statement of principles for Israeli-Palestinian peace

On September 22, following the tri-lateral meeting on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly with President Obama, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu and Palestinian President Abbas, a diverse group of religious and secular leaders issued a statement of principles supporting strong U.S. leadership to achieve a negotiated, sustainable resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, ELCA presiding bishop, was among the signers.

[Letter in Support of a Comprehensive Middle East Peace](#)

[CMEP Bulletin: Sept. 25, 2009](#)

For ELCA news coverage of the September 22 statement of principles, [click here](#).

Bishops Munib Younan and Mark Hanson attend Georgetown conference

Bishop Munib Younan of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and ELCA Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson attended a conference on global Muslim-Christian relations October 6-8 in Washington, D.C. The conference -- A Common Word: Toward A Global Agenda for Change -- was hosted by the Prince Alwaleed Center at Georgetown University, currently under the direction of Professor John Esposito, and the Royal Aal al-Bayt Institute for Islamic Thought of Jordan. Prince Ghazi of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has been an instrumental figure in Muslim-Christian relations in recent years.

Conference attendees included former British Prime Minister Tony Blair who delivered a keynote speech, as well as grand muftis and other religious leaders from as far as Bosnia-Herzegovina and central Africa. Bishops Hanson and Younan both spoke imploringly at the conference about the resiliency of justice for other human beings, and not limiting ourselves as Christians to acts of charity. Structural justice, the peace process in the Middle East, and strengthening relational ties between Muslims and Christians, were essential aspects of the conference.

[Leaders and Scholars Discuss Interfaith Challenges](#) (Georgetown University News)

["Common Word" aims for "common deed" for peace](#) (Reuters Blog)

For ELCA news coverage of the conference, [click here](#).

New Young Adults in Global Mission begin service in the Holy Land

Six young women have begun serving the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land in such areas as the Lutheran School in Beit Sahour, the Lutheran School of Hope and congregation in Ramallah, Dar Al Kalima School in Bethlehem, the Helen Keller School for the Visually Impaired in Beit Hanina, Jerusalem, and the Director of Education office in Jerusalem. They are living in Beit Sahour, Beit Hanina, and Ramallah. Find links to several of their blogs [here](#).

Peace Not Walls Web site additions

[Holy Land Youth Mission flier and application form](#)

[Educational resource user guides](#)

[Palestinian crafts page and handout -- order now for your Christmas crafts fair](#)

[Middle East Network Newsletter \(MENET\) sign-up](#)
and [archived issues](#)

New Hope for Peace: What America Must Do to End the Israel-Palestine Conflict

Four American statesmen, Jimmy Carter, James Baker, Brent Scowcroft and Zbigniew Brzezinski, believe the Israeli-Palestinian conflict can be resolved and say the time is right for a new U.S. initiative in *New Hope for Peace*. This 20-minute DVD is presented by Landrum Bolling with cooperation from the Foundation for Middle East Peace and Mercy Corps International. Preview video on [YouTube](#). Copies available on request from the [Foundation for Middle East Peace](#), 202-835-3650, 1761 N Street, NW, Washington D.C. 20036.

UN Fact-Finding Mission to Gaza

Two United Nations bodies have discussed the report of the Fact-Finding Mission to Gaza, also known as the Goldstone report, and related matters in recent weeks. The Security Council discussion took place on October 14 in New York. A press release is [here](#).

The meeting record (S/PV.6201) can be accessed [here](#). The [webcast of the morning](#) and [afternoon discussions](#) may be viewed as well.

The Human Rights Council discussed the matter in Geneva on October 15 and 16 and the report and related information can be found [here](#). The webcasts are viewable [here](#).



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