

**Israel-Palestine Statement**  
**With Perspectives from Those with Greater Sympathy for Palestine or Israel**  
**Southwest California Synod**  
**May 2011**

**ELCA and Synod Timeline**

- August 2005 – At the Churchwide Assembly, resolution calls for awareness, accompaniment and advocacy, including stewarding financial assets for a just peace, and establishes Peace Not Walls Campaign.
- August 2007 – At the Churchwide Assembly, Assembly action affirms Peace Not Walls Campaign and issues travel recommendations, list of products to avoid from settlements and a purchasing policy guide to encourage purchasing products from Palestinian providers. Purchasing policy not to include divestiture.
- August 2009 – At Churchwide Assembly, Assembly action reaffirms Peace Not Walls Campaign, adding balanced... care for all parties.
- January 2010 – ELCA Analysis of December 2009 Kairos Palestine Document is released. The Kairos Palestine Document is a document signed by Bishop Younan and other interfaith leaders of the Holy Land “calling on churches to be attentive to the fact that some Christian theologies have legitimized the injustice experienced by Palestinians” [from ELCA Analysis] and endorsing “the beginning of a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel” as a form of nonviolent resistance [Section 7 of Kairos].
- May 2010 – At Southwest California Synod Assembly, Resolution 10-11 To Divest, Boycott and Sanction Israel until It Complies With International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights, which was submitted to 2010 Synod Assembly, is referred to Synod Council.
- March 2011 – Presiding Bishop Hanson joins interfaith leaders in a letter to President Obama expressing regret that the US vetoed the UN Security Council resolution reaffirming that settlements are illegal.
- April 19, 2011 – ELCA Presiding Bishop Joins Interfaith Call for Middle East Peace 11-056-JB. The Rev. Mark S. Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), and 32 Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders, said a new peace initiative by former Israeli government, intelligence and security officials offers a useful sign for Middle East peace. The initiative, along with previous Middle East peace initiatives, offers "key principles and ideas for negotiations to achieve comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace," the religious leaders said in a letter to President Barack Obama. See <http://www.elca.org/News/Releases.asp?a=4750> and <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Advocacy.aspx> . (These are printed on pages 5 and 6 of this statement.)
- May 2011 – The work of the Israel-Palestine Committee of the Southwest California Synod is available in a 6-page or 13-page document. The shorter document contains only areas of agreement. The larger document also includes perspectives of those who would have greater sympathy for either Palestine or Israel. Both documents are available online at [www.socalsynod.org](http://www.socalsynod.org) . For a hard copy, please contact the Synod Office at Southwest California Synod, 1300 E. Colorado St., Glendale, CA 91205-1406.

## **2010 Synod Assembly**

At our May 2010 Synod Assembly, after a respectful exchange of ideas regarding Resolution 10-11 To Divest, Boycott and Sanction Israel until It Complies With International Law and Universal Principles of Human Rights, a motion was passed as follows:

“To refer Resolution 10-11 to the Synod Council with the instruction that the Council form a Committee made up of persons from the Justice Team and those who have spoken in opposition to resolution 10-11 to form a possible joint statement for action by the Assembly. The committee shall report on its work to the Synod no later than at the 2011 Synod Assembly.”

## **Israel-Palestine Committee**

In March 2011, the Committee was formed including Bishop Dean Nelson, Pastor Wayne Christiansen, Pastor Roger Rogahn, Pastor David Berkedal, Jane Affonso, Lee Carlson, Garrett Biehle, Pastor George McLeary, Ross McConnell, Ron Nelson, Lillian Simons, Ray Huff and Lori Splinter. The first meeting was held March 10, 2011.

With the command of Jesus in John 15:12 and even the more simple form John 15:17 compelling, “This is my command: Love each other,” how do we love these neighbors? How do we love those who abuse power, disregard human rights and use violence to promote their view? How do we speak to justice and righteousness in a world that won’t listen and, truthfully, doesn’t care because their minds are made up? How do we hope to make a difference in a world so far away and yet so connected to the core of who we are?

The Committee believed that it was best to present a statement that endorsed core Christian values, such as God’s love for all people (John 3:16), a concern for the oppressed (Exodus 3:7) and a desire for justice (Amos 5:24). While our discussion did not lead us to a shared understanding of how to balance questions of responsibility for injustice or victimization on either side, we did find areas where we agreed.

We found that we could all agree that those around the table were people of good will who were seeking to apply their Christian faith to very complicated issues. While we could not agree on how best to address those issues, we agreed that inaction is not an acceptable option.

We therefore call upon the people of God in the Southwest California Synod, as people likewise of good will, to seek the will of God and take action, upon the discernment of that will, choosing from whichever of the possibilities we present below seems right to them and to the Holy Spirit in order to present a just and balanced approach to the historically difficult challenges presented by both sides in the peace process.

### **We agree to:**

- Pray for a peaceful resolution of the conflict between Israel and Palestine;
- Sign the document “For the Peace of Jerusalem” at [www.PeaceofJerusalem.org](http://www.PeaceofJerusalem.org) organized by Churches for Middle East Peace, [www.cmep.org](http://www.cmep.org);
- Evaluate and refine its peace-making efforts to demonstrate as full as possible the “balanced...care for all parties” expressed in the Churchwide Strategy for Engagement in Israel and Palestine (2005; Sect. II.A), while continuing our unique relationship with and accompaniment of Palestinian Christians and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and Holy Land (ELCJHL);
- Learn more about the experiences of both Israelis and Palestinians and their mutual fears, aspirations, and hopes;
- Work to convey the concerns and perspectives of Palestinians and Israelis that dispel stereotypes and caricatures and promote better understanding;
- Lift up the voices within both communities, especially those of victims of violence, that seek peace with justice through nonviolent responses to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict;
- Continue to help alleviate the humanitarian needs of all of those affected by the conflict;
- Support U.S. efforts that promote peace and cooperation for all parties to the conflict; and
- Continue to pray for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and for the Israeli and Palestinian peoples.

### **Awareness –**

- Before we can speak truth, we have to learn truth. We must dedicate ourselves to the task of educating ourselves and our congregations. We cannot rely on American media alone. We must learn the truth of what goes on in the Holy Land.
- Study the letters and statements from the Presiding Bishop and use them as a point of discussion and possible action.
- Copy and share letters from people who are there. Also, get to know all people who live, work and worship there.
- Read the books and listen to the voices that reach out to us – voices that cry for justice.
- Continue to pray for wisdom, justice and peace.

### **Advocacy –**

- Speak the truth. Awareness and Advocacy are closely linked. Once we are aware of the truth, then we have to speak it. We need to be discussing the Holy Land in our congregations, in our newsletters, on our web-sites and on every level of the church.

This is easy to say and very difficult to do. People stop listening – especially if they perceive our voice as strident. We need balance, love, and prayer.

- Support the Christian leaders and workers in Jerusalem so that they may provide God’s light and hope.
- Write or call your congress representatives. A written letter or phone call makes a stronger impact than email.
- Write a letter to the editor or an op-ed for your local newspaper.
- Write a letter to President Obama using the statement on page 12 of this document as a guide, as you find agreeable.
- Speak the truth with love.

**Accompaniment –**

- To those who say these problems can never be fixed, we say continue to hope.
- Support schools that teach peace and reconciliation.
- When travelling, in addition to Israeli and Palestinian sources, follow travel recommendations as suggested by the ELCA and in consultation with the Bishop’s office in Jerusalem. Do not go and see just the tourist sites but also meet the people, explore the situations and learn about the area.
- Consider what impact your actions have on those living and working in Israel, Jordan and Palestine. There are shopkeepers with inventory who are living on the margins and rely on visitors to purchase their goods.

**Those who tend to advocate for our greater sympathy for the Palestinians, including Committee members Pastor Wayne Christiansen, Pastor George McLeary and Jane Affonso, recommend the following resources:**

**Awareness –**

- Read the February 18, 2011, Statement on the United States Veto of the U.N. Resolution on Israeli Settlements from Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson, which can be found at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Messages-and-Statements.aspx> Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson ends the statement by saying, “In the wake of this action, I call upon the international community, including the United States, to work diligently toward commencing negotiations with the aim of reaching a final status agreement.”

- Read Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson's March 7, 2011, Letter to President Obama on U.N. Settlement Veto and Further Peace Efforts found at [www.cmep.org/content/letter-president-obama-un-settlement-veto-and-further-peace-efforts](http://www.cmep.org/content/letter-president-obama-un-settlement-veto-and-further-peace-efforts) .
- Use and promote the Peace Not Walls Campaign. See <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx> .
- Read the Kairos Palestine Document. An ecumenical group of Palestinian Christians issued *The Kairos Palestine Document: A moment of truth - A word of faith, hope and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering* from a meeting in Bethlehem Friday, December 11, 2010. The document is a word of hope to Palestinian Christians and a challenge for churches to work toward an end of Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands as well as to re-examine theologies that support the Israeli occupation. See <http://www.kairopalestine.ps/sites/default/Documents/English.pdf> .
- Go to [www.elca.org](http://www.elca.org) and subscribe to the Middle East Network Newsletter.

#### **Accompaniment –**

- Pray for those who are oppressed.
- Find out how some theologies, such as Christian Zionism and Millennialism, and ways of looking at the bible can negatively affect our companions. Explore alternatives. See <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace.html> .
- Support the Palestinians – the oppressed in this situation.
- Support an ELCA missionary or a Young Adult in Global Mission to work with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land.
- Use Palestinian communion ware – the presence on the altar is a powerful statement and an open door for speaking to the situation.
- Support Augusta Victoria Hospital – the only hospital in the West Bank. One way is to buy the olive oil that is harvested on the Mount of Olives where the hospital stands.
- Become a partner with one of the churches that serves our Lutheran sisters and brothers. Let them tell you their story. Learn and grow together.
- Buy Palestinian crafts.
- Support the efforts of the Ecumenical Accompaniment Project to observe the situation and deter violence. See <http://www.eappi.org> .
- Support Christian Peacemaker Teams. Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) is a living answer to the question, "What would happen if Christians devoted the same discipline and self-sacrifice to nonviolent peacemaking that armies devote to war?" Partnering

with nonviolent movements around the world, CPT seeks to embody an inclusive, ecumenical and diverse community of God's love. See <http://cpt.org> .

### **Advocacy –**

- Write or call your congress representatives based on Peace Not Walls action alerts. A written letter or phone call makes a stronger impact than email.
- Attend Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) Advocacy Days during May 22-24, 2011, in Washington, D.C. Register at <http://www.cmepe.org/content/advocacy-conference-2011> .
- Host a conference on Peace with Justice in the Holy Land and introduce people to our companions, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land and Israeli peacemakers via Skype. Peace Not Walls website can help you identify speakers, moderators and resources. Invite all local churches. See <http://www.elca.org/Our-Faith-In-Action/Justice/Peace-Not-Walls.aspx> .
- Purchase Palestinian crafts for congregational craft fairs or for your own personal gifts to support the ailing Palestinian economy.
- Avoid buying products made in illegal Israeli settlements built on Palestinian land. A list of settlement products can be found on the ELCA website at under Peace Not Walls at <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace.html> (Gush Shalom is an Israeli peace activism group founded and led by former Irgun and Knesset Member and journalist, Uri Avnery, in 1993.)
- Contact elected officials with the concerns of Palestinians. See [www.CMEPE.org](http://www.CMEPE.org) for suggestions.
- Contribute through Lutheran World Relief and Lutheran World Federation.
- Begin a system of economic sanctions and boycott to be applied against Israel as called for in the Kairos Palestine Document.
- As a personal choice, you could choose to boycott and divest as proposed in the submitted 2010 Synod Resolution 10-11.
- Support the responses that Presiding Bishop Hanson made to the issue of illegal settlements earlier this year. These illegal settlements are more a matter of a political strategy by Israel, than being mainly a matter of their national defense. The justification for such settlements - and the acquisition of other new territories by Israel, gets us too much into making this a religious justification, rather than keeping it as a secular (and justice) issues, which the Kairos Palestine Document points out as a way to help bring resolution to the issues.
- Support a practical, secular solution to peace. “Trying to make the state a religious state, Jewish or Islamic, suffocates the state, confines it within narrow limits, and

transforms it into a state that practices discrimination and exclusion, preferring one citizen over another. We appeal to both religious Jews and Muslims: let the state be a state for all its citizens, with a vision constructed on respect for religion but also equality, justice, liberty and respect for pluralism and not on domination by a religion or a numerical majority.” [Kairos Palestine Document Section 9.3]

- Hold on to hope. “Recalling earlier Kairos documents, we join these leaders in their search for signs of hope and positive responses in the midst of a dire and seemingly intractable situation. Their hope, their affirmation of love for every person, and their nonviolent resistance to the occupation inspire us **to continue to do what we can to stand with our companions and partners** seeking a lasting and just peace for all in the region.” [Presiding Bishop Mark Hanson on the Kairos Palestine Document, found at <http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide--Organization/Office-of-the-Presiding-Bishop/Messages-and-Statements/091217.aspx> .]

**Those who tend to advocate for our greater sympathy for Israel, including Committee members Pastor David Berkedal, Lee Carlson and Ray Huff, recommend the following resources:**

The Bible, in the book of Genesis, states a specific plan for descendents of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the line of Ishmael. Abraham is given promises for the future in: Genesis 12:1-3; 13:14-17; 15:1-5; 17:15-16 and 25:5-11. Ishmael is given promises for the future in: Genesis 16:8-15; 17:20-27; 21:15-21 and 25:12-18.

“God so loved the world” this applies to both Jews and non-Jews. It includes the Arabs, the descendents from the line of Ishmael. It also includes the Palestinian people.

It is important to acknowledge the significance of the Jewish people and nation of Israel to our Christian heritage. Without either, there might never have been a Reformation, led by Martin Luther, because the birth and ministry of Jesus would possibly not have occurred. Jesus said in Revelation 22:16, “I am the root and the descendent of David.”

The Bible makes clear that Jesus was first sent to the Jewish people as their Messiah. Jesus himself said this to two separate Samaritan women (Matthew 15:24-27 and John 4:24). The Bible tells us to pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6). Since we are Christians, we must do everything possible to foster a Godly, peaceful and productive relationship with all the peoples of the Middle East. However, we acknowledge there will never be true peace and the absence of conflict in the world until the coming of God’s Kingdom in its fullness.

Get informed. Visit web sites such as the Israeli government's Web site [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il), the Anti-defamation League’s site at [www.adl.org](http://www.adl.org) (particularly the Interfaith and Education tabs),

and other American Jewish organizations' websites such as [www.ujc.org](http://www.ujc.org) and [www.jewishpublicaffairs.org](http://www.jewishpublicaffairs.org).

Visit [www.aish.com/h/iid/48884102.html](http://www.aish.com/h/iid/48884102.html) and put into practice your Christian understanding of the recommendations in the article "54 Ways You Can Help Israel", from which the following are suggested:

1. Buy Israeli products and services.

With the Israeli economy suffering, go out of your way to support Israel's export trade. Websites [www.shopinIsrael.com](http://www.shopinIsrael.com), [www.usaisrael.org](http://www.usaisrael.org), [www.israeliwishes.com](http://www.israeliwishes.com), and [www.israeliproducts.com](http://www.israeliproducts.com) allow you to buy Israeli products directly. [www.shorashim.net](http://www.shorashim.net) is an online tourist gift shop. When in the grocery store, look for brands like Elite, Telma, Osem, and Ahava beauty products -- even if you have to pay a few more dollars for Israeli products. Ask the supermarket manager to order these items specifically. Buy Israeli wine to bring as a gift when you visit friends. Home Depot and other stores have many made in Israel products -- especially plastics. [www.isralexport.org](http://www.isralexport.org) lists the names of products sold in the USA.

3. Get the facts.

The Internet is a great resource for getting an accurate picture of what is really happening in the conflict. For daily news, visit the Jerusalem Post at <http://www.jpost.com> and IMRA at <http://www.imra.org.il>. For crucial background information, read "Israel: A History" by Martin Gilbert, "From Time Immemorial" by Joan Peters, and "Myths and Facts" by Mitchell G. Bard -- online at <http://www.us-israel.org/jsource/myths/mftoc.html>.

6. Protest bias in the media.

The media has a powerful influence on public opinion and government policy. When you discover a piece of bias, immediately contact the news agency and complain. Keep your remarks respectful and stick to the facts. Build a list of e-mail addresses of friends and colleagues, so when you discover bias, you can alert others to also file a complaint. There is power in the number of responses, even if your specific letter is not printed. You can join a media watch email list at [www.HonestReporting.com](http://www.HonestReporting.com) which gives guidelines for how to be effective in contacting the media, and has over 25,000 subscribers protesting biased news against Israel.

11. Conserve energy.

Dependence on Arab oil drives much of the pro-Arab sentiment throughout the world. American foreign policy is also heavily influenced by the need for imported oil. To conserve energy, take simple measures like making sure your tires are properly inflated, using compact fluorescent light bulbs in your home, and buying energy-efficient cars and appliances. What about hanging up those car keys and walking or riding your bicycle for a change? If millions would cut down on fuel consumption, the Arab clout would change. Also, don't visit gas stations who import oil from Arab countries. On a public policy level, urge your political representatives to allow drilling

for oil (while taking appropriate measures to protect the environment), and to pass energy conservation measures.

12. Recognize the God factor.

With all the practical efforts to help Israel -- media watch, education, economic assistance, political lobbying, etc. -- don't forget the spiritual component! The very existence of the Jewish people after 3,500 years -- and the return to the land after a long exile -- is miraculous. Understand the significance of Abraham's covenant with God. Each of us, on whatever level of observance, must strive to connect.

17. Holocaust education.

With the rise of anti-Semitic incidents around the world, and the state-sponsored anti-Semitism in Arab countries, it is important to see the warning signs before a crisis happens. Learning about the Holocaust helps us appreciate the depth of anti-Semitism and its root causes. Excellent information is online at [www.anti-semitism.com](http://www.anti-semitism.com). Squelch all anti-Semitic language everywhere you are. Stand up against this terrible hatred -- no matter what the consequences.

18. Visit your Congressman.

Form a concerned citizen's group, and then make appointment to sit with your Congressman for an hour in his Washington office. Then rent a bus and go! He will see how seriously his/her constituents are about the Mideast issues.

23. Make a small repair.

If you've had an argument with someone, simply forgive them, and then ask God to forgive His people.

28. Organize an Israeli products fair.

In Denver, Christians and Jews have come together under "Action Israel" to sponsor what is called "Ben Yehudah Street in Denver." Shop owners in Jerusalem send some of their inventory and it is sold for them. This helps Jerusalem merchants keep their shops open and provide a living for their families during this terrible time. Thousands turned out for the first effort, and another is scheduled for April 21 at the JCC in Denver.

33. Get the Israeli side.

There's a lot of misinformation out there. When an incident happens in Israel, visit the websites of the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs at [www.mfa.gov.il](http://www.mfa.gov.il) and the Israeli Defense Forces at [www.idf.il/english/news/main.stm](http://www.idf.il/english/news/main.stm) to get the Israeli side of the story.

35. Contact the president.

Call or email President Obama daily or weekly, to commend his support for Israel in the common fight against terrorism, and respectfully urge him to allow Israel to take vigorous action to defend itself. Write a short, personal email with a subject line like: "Thank you for standing

with Israel." Every call, letter, and fax is counted. Send email to [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov) , or call the White House comment line at 202-456-1111 or 202-456-1414.

39. Recite Psalms.

There is a time-honored custom for Jews [ed. and Christians] to gather and recite Psalms in times of distress. King David wrote stirring words that seem to be written for our exact situation today! You can set up a schedule to say a few Psalms every day (recommended are Psalms 20, 83, 121, 130 and 142), or organize a group of friends to share saying the entire book together. Rabbi Elyashiv in Israel has requested that all Jews worldwide take 15 minutes out of their hectic daily schedules to say Psalms. You can say them in Hebrew or English, and a free downloadable translation is available at [www.artscroll.com](http://www.artscroll.com).

45. Show both sides of the refugee issue.

In conversations and in the media, emphasize how the Arab states have mistreated the Palestinians -- refusing to grant them citizenship in order to keep the "refugee" issue an open wound. Raise the issue of how 600,000 Jews were driven out of Arab lands during Israel's independence and forced to abandon their property, with no right of return or compensation ever extended to these Jewish refugees.

46. Hold governments accountable.

Write and call (and boycott if necessary) any governments that are complicit in anti-Semitic and anti-Israel activities. Educate the public about the inconsistency of the European Union stand. Why would democracies -- who support human rights -- not speak out against virulent Arab hate speech? Protest at the consulates of those countries who have minimized the anti-Semitic activities taking place in their countries.

50. Support Israeli artists.

With tourism virtually non-existent, many Israelis who depend on it for their livelihood are suffering. If you're going to buy a gift, try to buy a work (piece of art, clothing, jewelry etc.) by an Israeli artist. In Los Angeles, Victorian Rose in Brentwood Gardens has unique jewelry and other works by Israeli artists. She can be reached at 310-826-9102. You can also visit [www.ArtofIsrael.com](http://www.ArtofIsrael.com) .

51. Sign up for solidarity.

[www.our-support.com](http://www.our-support.com) is a website to enable people around the world to express support for the State of Israel. One million people have already signed up. The text will be presented to ambassadors in every country and published in the media.

### **In concluding this Value Statement**

The Committee was presented the monumental task “to form a possible joint statement” amongst passionate people of differing perspectives. There were areas of agreement and, obviously, areas where we just could not agree. Our goal was to provide information for action.

It’s not that everyone will do everything, but everyone can do something. Do what you are gifted to do. Learn, teach, write, buy, travel – whatever you can do in love. And do it all with prayer.

### **Suggested Books**

- Bible: *Lutheran Study Bible, New Revised Standard Version*. Augsburg Fortress (2009)
- Ajami, Fouad: *The Arab Predicament*. Cambridge University Press (1992)
- Ateek, Naim Stifan: *Justice and Only Justice, a Palestinian Theology of Liberation*. Orbis Books (1989)
- Bickerton, Ian J., and Klausner, Carla L.: *A Concise History of the Arab-Israeli Conflict*. Prentice Hall (2004)
- Boutros-Ghali, Boutros: *Egypt’s Road to Jerusalem: A Diplomat’s Story of the Struggle for Peace in the Middle East*. Random House (1997)
- Chacour, Elias and Jensen, Mary E.: *We Belong to the Land: The Story of a Palestinian Israeli Who Lives for Peace & Reconciliation (Erma Konya Kess Lives of the Just and Virtuous Series)*. University of Notre Dame Press (2001)
- Clinton, Bill: *My Life*. Vintage Books (2005)
- Dershowitz, Alan M.: *The Case Against Israel’s Enemies: Exposing Jimmy Carter and Others Who Stand in the Way of Peace*. Wiley (2009)
- Dershowitz, Alan M.: *The Case for Israel*. Wiley (2003)
- Farsoun, Samih K. with Christina E. Zacharia: *Palestine and the Palestinians*. Westview Press (1998)
- Pettit, Rev. Dr. Peter A.: *The Arab Israeli Palestinian Conflict: Peter A Pettit in Conversation with John Stendahl*. Fortress Press, Minneapolis (2008)
- Said, Edward W.: *Orientalism*. Vintage Books (1979)
- Shipler, David: *Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land*. Penguin Books (1987, 2002)
- Tolan, Sandy: *The Lemon Tree: An Arab, a Jew and the Heart of the Middle East*. Bloomsbury USA (2006)
- Waraq, Ibn: *Defending the West: A Critique of Edward Said’s Orientalism*. Prometheus Books (2007)

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

E-Mail: [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com)

Website: [www.nili-mideastpeace.org](http://www.nili-mideastpeace.org)

April 14, 2011

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President,

The launching of a new peace initiative by a group of former Israeli government, intelligence and security officials prompts us to write to you as leaders of Jewish, Christian, and Muslim national religious organizations who are committed to strong U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Given the current stalemate in negotiations, the threat of escalation of violent confrontations between Israelis and Palestinians, and the goal and expectation that peace can be achieved this year, we believe the Israeli peace initiative, the earlier Arab Peace Initiative, and the Geneva Accord, taken together, offer key principles and ideas for negotiations to achieve comprehensive Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace.

The main elements of these peace initiatives reflect years of official and informal, unofficial negotiations and include: creation of a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza, based on the 1967 borders with possible limited land swaps as mutually agreed; a fair negotiated resolution of the issue of refugees that does not threaten the demography of Israel; the sharing of Jerusalem by Israel and the Palestinian state with both having their capitals in the city; and Israeli withdrawal from the Golan Heights as part of a peace agreement with Syria. We believe the United States, in coordination with the Quartet, should support these elements being addressed in negotiations on an urgent basis. In addition, of particular concern to our communities are guarantees for free access to Jewish, Christian and Muslim holy places.

We encourage you to visit Jerusalem and the region soon to meet with Israeli and Palestinian leaders to discuss next steps toward achieving peace based on the principles and ideas in these peace initiatives.

We pledge our prayers and public support for active, fair and firm U.S. leadership in this urgent endeavor. We believe you can count on substantial support from members of churches, synagogues, and mosques across the country.

Sincerely yours,

(List of Endorsers follows)

Cc: Secretary of State Hillary Clinton

National Security Advisor Tom Donilon

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

**E-Mail: [usicpme@aol.com](mailto:usicpme@aol.com)**

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**Tel: (425) 327-7545**

**Letter to President Barack Obama, April 14, 2011**

**List of Endorsers**

**Christian Leaders:**

His Eminence Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington \*

Bishop Howard J. Hubbard, Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace, USCCB\*

Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, Director, Ecumenical Affairs, Armenia Orthodox Church in America\*

Fr. Mark Arey, Director, Office of Ecumenical Affairs, Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America\*

The Reverend Peg Chamberlin, President, National Council of Churches of Christ USA\*

The Reverend Michael Kinnamon, General Secretary, 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\*

The Reverend Geoffrey Black, General Minister & President, United Church of Christ\*

The Rev. Dr. Sharon Watkins, General Minister, President, Christian Churches (Disciples of Christ)\*

The Reverend Gradye Parsons, Stated Clerk, Presbyterian Church (USA)\*

Bishop Sharon Zimmerman Rader, Council of Bishops, United Methodist Church\*

Richard Stearns, President, World Vision United States\*

The Reverend Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US\*

David Neff, Editor in Chief and Vice-President, Christianity Today\*

The Reverend John M. Buchanan, Editor and Publisher, Christian Century\*

**Jewish Leaders:**

Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism\*

Rabbi Ellen Weinberg Dreyfus, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Peter Knobel, Past President, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Paul Menitoff, Past President, Central Conference of American Rabbis\*

Rabbi Alvin Sugarman, Vice President, A Different Future\*

Rabbi Elliot Dorff, Rector, American Jewish University\*

Rabbi Burton Visotzky, Professor of Midrash & Interreligious Studies, Jewish Theological Seminary\*

Rabbi Shawn Zevit, Director of Congregational Services, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation\*

Dr. Carl Sheingold, Former Executive Vice President, Jewish Reconstructionist Federation\*

Rabbi Amy Small, Past President, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Assembly\*

**Muslim Leaders:**

Dr. Sayyid Muhammad Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America\*

Imam Mohammed ibn Hagmagid, Vice President, Islamic Society of North America\*

Naeem Baig, Executive Director, Islamic Circle of North America\*

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