



# TAKE ACTION!!

May 8, 2008

## Support Peace in the Holy Land: Help End the Crisis in Southern Israel and Gaza

**TAKE ACTION NOW!** Visit the CRS Action Center (<http://actioncenter.crs.org>) now to contact your Members of Congress and urge them to sign the letter circulated by Representatives David Price (D-NC) and Ray Lahood (R-IL) to President Bush that supports efforts to end the crisis in Southern Israel and Gaza as part of achieving a peace agreement this year. **Signatures are due on May 12, 2008 in time for President Bush's trip to the Middle East.**

**WHAT DOES THE PRICE-LAHOOD LETTER ASK PRESIDENT BUSH TO DO?** In their letter, Representatives Price and Lahood write that the ongoing crisis in southern Israel and Gaza is undermining progress on the Annapolis peace process that President Bush initiated in November 2007 between Israelis and Palestinians. The letter asks President Bush to implement solutions to stabilize the Gaza situation and keep the peace negotiations on track, including a cease-fire to stop the violence and an end to the border blockade that meets Israel's security needs and provides humanitarian relief for the people of Gaza. [Read the Price-LaHood letter.](#)

**WHAT IS THE CURRENT SITUATION IN THE HOLY LAND?** In the land that is considered holy to Jews, Christians, and Muslims terrible violence and conflict have left both Israelis and Palestinians suffering. The current crisis in the West Bank and Gaza is one of the worst humanitarian situations in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. It threatens not only the well-being of Palestinian civilians and the very poor, but also endangers prospects for a sustainable peace between Palestinians and Israelis. Suicide bombings and rocket attacks on civilian areas have terrorized Israelis. Four decades of occupation coupled with expanding settlements, the Security Wall, and restrictions on the movement of people and goods have devastated the Palestinian economy. Poverty rates are nearly 65 percent and food insecurity has risen 13 percent since 2006.

**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."

Pope Benedict XVI stated in his message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace this year: "I am glad that the Annapolis Conference pointed towards the abandonment of partisan or unilateral solutions, in favour of a global approach respectful of the rights and legitimate interests of all the peoples of the region. I appeal once more to the Israelis and the Palestinians to concentrate their energies on the implementation of commitments made on that occasion, and to expedite the process that has happily been restarted. Moreover, I invite the international community to give strong support to these two peoples and to understand their respective sufferings and fears."

**WHAT IS THE CATHOLIC CHURCH DOING TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND?** In 2005, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) embarked on the Catholic Campaign for Peace in the Holy Land ([http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland\\_peace.shtml](http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/holyland_peace.shtml)). The campaign's goal is to create a shared commitment to the broad outlines of a just resolution of the conflict and to raise a united voice with policy makers and the wider public. A recent letter (<http://www.usccb.org/sdwp/international/interreligious.shtml>) by the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East, signed by Cardinal George and Cardinal McCarrick to Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, is part of the campaign's work.

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. USCCB and CRS are advocating for stronger U.S. leadership to hold both parties to the conflict accountable in building a just peace. We also support U.S. funding for the Palestinian Authority to increase its ability to govern as well as urgently needed humanitarian assistance for the Palestinian people.

**WHAT IS THE U.S. GOVERNMENT DOING TO PROMOTE PEACE IN THE HOLY LAND?** In November 2007, President Bush convened a meeting in Annapolis with Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and other foreign leaders to advance a resolution of the conflict. The President reiterated his support for peace and a two-state solution and has publicly committed to finalizing a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians this year. This provides a unique opportunity to resolve the major issues of this crisis.

### For more information contact:

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