



Department of Social Development and World Peace

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December 5, 2006

Mr. Stephen J. Hadley
National Security Advisor
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

BY FAX: 202-456-9490

Dear Mr. Hadley:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Policy of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), I am writing to share our alarm and deep concern regarding the threat of full-scale conflict in Somalia, a clash that could spill over into other countries in the Horn of Africa. Rising tensions, militarization and a lack of genuine dialogue have created a situation where a major conflict has become increasingly likely. Military action is not the solution to this problem. Civilians, especially women and children, would bear the brunt of any violence, and the people of the region could suffer many deaths and massive displacement.

Somalia is a diverse country with a rich cultural tradition and enormous potential. However, it has faced numerous difficulties in governing itself for more than a decade, and the resulting instability has caused immense hardship for the Somali people. Drought and flooding this year have exacerbated problems caused by conflict, deepening poverty and acute health problems.

The Somali people deserve international support in their search for a resolution to a worsening crisis that has already taken a devastating human toll in the last 15 years. Various parties in Somalia, and its neighboring states, have legitimate security concerns, but an aggressive military strategy will not resolve the current situation.

With the looming threat of widespread armed conflict and violence against civilians, intense and immediate diplomatic efforts are needed. These efforts must be followed by patient, long-term diplomacy, peace building and humanitarian support. Calmer heads must prevail in Somalia and the region, and the international community must take clear and immediate steps to reduce tensions by intervening directly with regional actors to promote increased dialogue.

Our Conference of bishops urges the government of the United States to:

- Call on the Transitional Federal Government (TFG), the Council of Somali Islamic Courts (CSIC) and neighboring states to stop the escalation of conflicts and publicly to declare their support for the current peace process, including talks scheduled for mid-December in Khartoum.

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- Call on the U.N. and international community to increase diplomatic efforts aimed at reducing tensions, promoting dialogue, and supporting concrete steps to reduce the potential for war. Particular support is needed for measures that would reduce militarization in the region.
- Expand high-level diplomatic attention to the situation in Somalia in order to promote a peaceful solution to the current crisis. In particular, the United States should engage more closely with key actors – especially Somalia’s neighbors and other African governments – in order to help avert a full-scale conflict and work toward a viable long-term solution.

With gratitude for your urgent attention to the deepening crisis in Somalia and the region, I am

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Thomas Wenski". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal stroke at the beginning.

Bishop Thomas G. Wenski
Bishop of Orlando
Chairman, Committee on International Policy