



## ***Committee on International Justice and Peace***

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August 24, 2015

The Honorable John Kerry  
Secretary of State  
2201 C St NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I write regarding the injustice being perpetrated in the Cremisan Valley near Bethlehem in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. My predecessor as Chairman called this situation to your attention earlier. A recent statement of the Latin Patriarchate encapsulates our concerns:

“On Monday morning, August 17, Israeli bulldozers arrived unannounced on private properties in Beir Ona, near the Cremisan Valley, to resume construction of the Separation Wall. The residents of the area were surprised and felt the pain of the loss of about fifty of their centuries-old olive trees that were uprooted.

The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem strongly condemns this Israeli conducted operation, which is without regard to the rights of the families of the valley; the rights that these same families have bravely tried to defend before the law over the past decade. We join with the sorrow and frustration of these oppressed families, and we strongly condemn the injustice done to them.

The construction of the Separation Wall and the confiscation of lands of the local families are threats and insults to peace. We call on the Israeli authorities to await the decision on the petition submitted by the families of the Valley to the Supreme Court of Israel a few days ago and to stop the work that has been started.”

We urge you to press Israeli authorities to stop the work on the Separation Wall whose route is confiscating the private lands of Palestinian families in the West Bank. Such actions undermine the cause of peace and impair the possibility of a two-state solution.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Oscar Cantú  
Bishop of Las Cruces

Chairman, Committee on International Justice and Peace