



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

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December 30, 2008

The Honorable Dr. Condoleezza Rice  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rice:

As Chairman of the Committee on International Justice and Peace of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, I urge you to take immediate action to help end the escalation of violence between Hamas and Israel. The rocket attacks on Israel must be stopped, and Israel's military attacks on Gaza halted. Our Conference believes that more than words are needed. We ask you to urge the President to send a high level personal representative to the region immediately to help negotiate a ceasefire and make provision for humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza.

The toll in human deaths and suffering, the negative effects on progress in negotiations for peace, and the risks of wider war caused by this escalation of violence cannot be allowed to continue. Our Holy Father Pope Benedict XVI has called on the international community to help Israelis and Palestinians to discard the "dead end" of violence and pursue instead "the path of dialogue and negotiations." Immediate, visible, and decisive U.S. leadership is urgently needed.

Our Conference will encourage Catholics to support active U.S. engagement to achieve a ceasefire, and we are prepared to do whatever we can to be helpful to efforts to halt the violence and restore progress toward peace.

At a time when the attention of Christians is drawn naturally to the birthplace of the Prince of Peace, it is tragic that innocent civilians are once again the victims of armed conflict and a humanitarian crisis. A ceasefire and humanitarian relief are indispensable initial steps on the road to a two-state solution—a secure Israel living in peace with a viable Palestinian state—with justice and peace for both peoples.

Sincerely yours,

Most Reverend Howard J. Hubbard  
Bishop of Albany  
Chairman, Committee on International Justice  
and Peace