

National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

December 4, 2008

President-Elect Barack Obama
Presidential Transition Team
Washington, DC 20270

Dear Mr. President-elect:

We write on behalf of Jewish, Christian and Muslim religious leaders working together since 2003 in the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East (NILI), based on core teachings in our three traditions. Enclosed with this letter, we convey the most recent consensus statement of the Initiative. We offer warm congratulations on your election as President of the United States and our prayerful best wishes for your Presidency at this time of crisis and new opportunities.

We have appreciated your clear and consistent commitment to making active U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace a high priority from the beginning of your Presidency. We have been united in urging concerted U.S. leadership since the founding of the National Interreligious Leadership Initiative and have supported the current Administration in its efforts over the past two years. We believe it is essential that the leaders and people of Israel, the Palestinian territories and Arab states be assured that you intend to implement this priority with a sense of urgency following your Inauguration.

We are encouraged, despite some serious setbacks and challenges, by new signs of hope, including progress in direct Israeli-Palestinian talks, progress in indirect Syrian-Israeli talks, and the historic Arab Peace Initiative led by Saudi Arabia. It also is widely known and accepted that formal and informal Israeli-Palestinian talks over many years have produced practical ideas for resolving even the most difficult and emotional issues, including borders, security, refugees and Jerusalem.

We would look forward to an early and timely occasion to meet with you to offer our support as religious leaders for your leadership for peace. We hope also that we might have an opportunity to meet with Secretary of State-designate Clinton and to continue a practice, initiated by Secretary of State Rice, of our having regular high level meetings at the State Department to learn what the Administration is doing and to offer our ideas and support.

We pledge our prayers and active encouragement for your leadership for peace in the Middle East. Our nation and the world will be much safer with the achievement of peace in Jerusalem.

Respectfully,

His Eminence, Theodore Cardinal McCarrick, Archbishop Emeritus of Washington
Rabbi David Saperstein, Director, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism
Dr. Sayyid Mohammed Syeed, National Director, Islamic Society of North America
Archbishop Vicken Aykasian, President, National Council of Churches of Christ, USA
Rev. Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries, Board Member, World Vision US
Rabbi Peter Knobel, President, Central Conference of American Rabbis
Imam Yahya Hendi, Muslim Chaplain, Georgetown University

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National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East

Enc: NILI statement and list of endorsers

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