



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

April 30, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madame Secretary,

We wish to first thank you and the administration for your efforts toward Israeli/Palestinian peace. We fervently hope and pray for the success of these efforts.

We write today to express concern over new Israeli military orders regarding the prevention of infiltration in the West Bank, a development which would seem to work against prospects for peace. The new orders, signed October 13, 2009 with an effective date of April 13, 2010, broaden the definition of "infiltrator" in such a way that thousands of Palestinians whose homes are in the West Bank could be at risk for deportation. Furthermore, foreign nationals working, volunteering, or visiting the West Bank could potentially be affected.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America has a long history of ministry in the region, working in partnership with Palestinian Christians, including the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, and with the interfaith community. We are devoted to seeking a just peace for all people in the land. It is out of these relationships and commitments that our current concern arises.

While the previous orders from 1969 were focused on persons entering the West Bank unlawfully from Jordan, Syria, Egypt and Lebanon, the new orders appear to redefine "infiltrator" as anyone present in the West Bank without an Israeli permit. It is unclear what sort of permit is needed, and this vagueness is of great concern. The lack of clarity leaves room for both arbitrary and sweeping implementation.

Furthermore, regardless of how the orders are carried out over time, they are likely to have the immediate effect of increasing insecurity among West Bank residents. The ambiguity in the orders may cause many to fear that regular travel for work, education, medical care or visits to relatives could result in their being detained by the Israeli military, beyond the existing onerous restrictions on movement and access.

We recognize and appreciate Israel's need to provide for its security, but it is unclear how the present orders contribute to this goal. The orders do, however, have the potential to further disrupt normal life for thousands of West Bank residents, and in this regard we are concerned that their implementation could be an additional violation of international law,

including the fourth Geneva Convention, which requires Israel, as the occupying power, to safeguard the welfare of those living under occupation.

In light of the above considerations, we respectfully request that the U.S. government exert its influence to ensure that the orders in question are immediately frozen and ultimately rescinded.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bishop Bruce Burnside
South-Central Synod of Wisconsin
Chair, Middle East Caucus
Conference of Bishops

Bishop Murray D. Finck
Pacifica Synod
Member, Middle East Caucus

Bishop Gerald L. Mansholt
Central States Synod
Member, Middle East Caucus

Bishop Dean W. Nelson
Southwest California Synod
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Bishop Margaret G. Payne
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Bishop Duane Pederson
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Cc: The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop

The Rev. Allan C. Bjornberg
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