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QUESTION OF PALESTINE

THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

Letter dated 16 January 1990 from the Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People addressed to the Secretary-General

In my capacity as Chairman of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, I wish to draw your attention to the attached text entitled "Towards peace in the Middle East: perspectives, principles and hopes", approved on 8 November 1989 by the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (USA) at their general meeting held at Baltimore, Maryland, and to the position paper on the Middle East by the Canadian Council of Churches, approved by the General Board on 13 October 1989.

In view of the importance of these statements, the Bureau of the Committee decided, at its meeting on 9 January 1990, to request on behalf of the Committee that extracts from these statements relating to the question of Palestine should be issued as official documents of the General Assembly under the items entitled "Question of Palestine" and "The situation in the Middle East". I therefore have the honour to transmit to you, on behalf of the Committee, the request of the Bureau.

(Signed) Absa Claude **DIALLO**
Chairman of the Committee on the
Exercise of the Inalienable Rights
of the Palestinian People

ANNEX I

TOWARD PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST: PERSPECTIVES, PRINCIPLES AND HOPES

A STATEMENT BY THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS (USA)

As Catholic bishops and as citizens of the United States, we are **particularly** concerned for the peoples, the nations and the Church in the **Middle East**. Christianity is rooted in the soil of the Holy Land, where Jesus Christ was born, lived, taught, **died** and rose again. As pastors, we wish to offer solidarity with our brother bishops and support to the Church in the Middle East at a time of trial and difficulty. We sense the fear, hope, vulnerability and suffering of the diverse peoples of the region -- Jewish, Christian and Muslim. We have a deep **and** abiding relationship of respect for the Jewish people and support for the nation of Israel. We also feel with new urgency the pain and hopes of the Palestinian people. We have persistently tried to support the Lebanese people in their agony of war and devastation. As citizens of the United States, we **also recognize** the continuing engagement of our nation with the various Middle East countries and the significant impact of United States policy on the region.

We write this statement first and foremost as pastors and religious teachers deeply concerned about what continuing conflict and violence in the Middle East mean for the people who live there, **for all** the world and for people of faith everywhere. Our religious convictions, our **traditional** teaching and our ecclesial responsibilities call us to stand with the suffering, to advocate dialogue in place of violence and to work for genuine justice and peace. In 1973 and in 1978, the United States Catholic Conference issued policy statements on the Middle East outlining the principles we believed would contribute to a just and lasting peace. In light of a number of important subsequent developments, we seek in this statement to share our own reflections in the hope that they will contribute to a broad and sustained effort to help secure peace, justice, and security for all people in the Middle East. While our title refers to 'the Middle East', this statement will focus on two major dimensions of the region: first, the fate of Lebanon and second, the relationship of the Palestinian **people**, Israel and the Arab states.

At the outset, we wish to say a word about our hopes and concerns in addressing this complex set of issues fraught with such power and emotion among peoples of different faiths and convictions. We have sought in these reflections to state our concerns clearly, **with** balance and restraint and with genuine respect and appreciation for the strong feelings and deep convictions of others. We believe constructive dialogue does not require silence or avoidance of differences, but an understanding that people of good will can sometimes disagree without undermining fundamental relationships of respect. We hope our reflections will be perceived, understood and discussed in this context. Our consideration of this statement has been aided by the perspectives of leaders of a number of Jewish, Muslim **and other** Christian communities and **organizations**.

To address the Middle East is to confront a **region** with a **sacred** character and a conflicted history. To understand 'the Middle East **question**' it is necessary to probe political, religious, cultural and moral issues which are woven together in a complex tapestry. Reducing the reality of the Middle East to one dimension -- whether it be political, military, religious, ethnic or economic -- inevitably distorts the nature of the problems people and nations face there. This quest for simplification in turn leads to proposals which frustrate the task of shaping a just and **stable** peace in the Middle East.

I. The Religious and Political Significance of the Middle East

The complexity and challenge of the Middle East is related to its unique blend of religious and political history. Because it is the birthplace of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the region engages the interests, the hopes and the passions of people throughout the world. The history and geography of the Middle East are permeated by events, memories, traditions and texts by which hundreds of millions of believers in every part of the globe, in different ways, define their religious commitments and convictions. The religious communities living in the Middle East **today** hold in trust **the** religious legacy and heritage of much of the world's **population**. The sacred character and content of Middle East history provide an abiding resource of hope: that the family of Abraham, his descendants in faith, may be able to draw from their religious values and moral principles a common framework for shaping a peaceful future. As Catholic bishops we believe this hope is well founded; religious **conviction** and the moral vision which flows from it can provide the **motivation** and direction for transforming the present conflicts of the Middle East into a stable political community of peace. However, in judicious use of religious **convictions can** harden political attitudes, raise contingent claims to absolute status and obscure the fact that both prudence and justice may require political compromise at times.

It is difficult to conceive of this stable and peaceful future for the Middle East apart from the contributions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, a **contribution** which must be shaped and guided by **balanced**, careful and prudent resort to each religious tradition.

The religious diversity of the Middle East is matched by its political complexity. There are very few places in the world today where the **political** and human stakes are as great, and where the danger of military conflict is so high. A **distinguishing** characteristic of the Middle East **is the** way in which the political life of the region has direct and often dangerous global **implications**. At both the regional and the global level, therefore, the Middle East poses a major moral and political challenge.

The Region: The region in fact contains several distinct political **conflicts**. .

An adequate analysis of the Middle East must be grounded in a recognition of the distinct kinds of conflict which run through the area. At the same time, it is possible to **identify** a crucial issue which has **characterized** the history of the Middle East for the last forty years: the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian struggle. Both the moral dimension of the **Middle** East problem and its direct **relationship** to the larger issues of world politics are best illustrated by the continuing conflict of Israel, the Arab states and the Palestinian people.

While the disputes are cast in **political** terms, it is essential to understand that each of the major parties, **particularly the Israelis and Palestinians**, sees its political **position and objectives as** having a moral basis. **Political** objectives are supported by moral claims on both sides. The moral claims in turn are grounded in and supported by historical memories. The depth and the duration of the **Israeli-Palestinian** conflict has **produced contrasting** historical memories for both sides. **Israelis and Palestinians "remember"** and interpret the past very differently. These **different** memories and **interpretations** of recent history provide **conflicting** contexts for discussion of how to pursue peace and **justice** in the region.

In the Passover **Seder** Jews 'preserve **the** memory of the land of their **forefathers** at the heart of their hope' (**Commission of the Holy See for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Notes on the Correct way to Present the Jews and Judaism", Section VI, n. 33, May 1985**). They **recall** centuries of **discrimination** in East and West. They remember the **Shoah** (the Holocaust) which in the words of Pope John Paul II is a warning, witness and silent cry to all humanity.' At the time of the Holocaust they found few secure places to flee or find refuge. Israel represents for the Jewish community the hope of a **place of** security and

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safety in a world which has often not provided either for the Jewish people. Israel also represents for Israelis more than a place of security; it is regarded by them as a fulfilment of a religious promise.

Palestinians have ancient ties to the land as well. Some trace their roots to biblical times. Their history includes centuries of living under the rule of others: Byzantium, the Caliphates, the Crusaders, the Ottoman Empire, and the British Mandate. In recent times their memories include the loss of ancestral lands and hundreds of villages; the displacement of now more than 2,000,000 people, most living as exiles from their native land; the indifference of the world to their plight; and the frustration of their national aspirations.

The politics of the Middle East, shaped by this historical, moral and religious background, are not politics as usual. The essential stakes in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are the central values by which nations and peoples define their existence: security, sovereignty and territory. It is difficult to conceive of a more fundamental definition of political conflict. Without trying to define and describe the essence of the conflict at this point, it is useful to illustrate its intense and unyielding character.

For Israel, one way to describe its policy problem is the relationship of territory to security and survival. How much territory is required to guarantee the security of the state and the survival of its people? The terms of the debate have changed over time, particularly after the 1967 war, but the essential argument: what constitutes 'secure borders', has run through Israel's history as a modern state.

The Israelis live with a sense of political and psychological vulnerability which outside observers (especially in a country as large and physically protected as the United States) often fail to understand. Surrounded by Arab states (and formally at peace only with Egypt), Israelis see their geographical position as one of persistent vulnerability; they have an overriding sense that there is very little room for error in judging security issues. In addition to threats from other states, Israel has been continuously faced with acts of violence, including some acts of terrorism, by groups aligned with the Palestinian cause.

A result of this history, and the fact of five wars in forty years, is Israel's determination to be secure by amassing military power sufficient to offset the threat of its neighbors. In the minds of the Israelis, both the objectives they seek -- security and territory -- and their means are morally justified, because what is at stake is their survival as a people.

The reason why many in the Middle East and in the world have not been able to identify with Israel's case in all its aspects is not simply the inability to appreciate Israeli psychology. The more substantial reason is that Israel's conception of what is needed for security, particularly after 1967, has run directly counter to Palestinian claims and the territorial integrity of neighboring states.

The problem for the Palestinians has not been security and territory alone, but territory and that sovereignty needed to guarantee security. The Palestinian case -- often represented by other Arab voices in the past, but today a case made by Palestinians themselves -- is that they have been deprived of territory and denied status as a sovereign state. Palestinians argue that political existence in a world of sovereign states requires recognition of sovereignty; both territory and sovereignty are needed if Palestinians, living inside and outside the Israeli occupied territories, are to regain their political identity.

The Palestinian conception of how much territory is necessary for a viable sovereign state has also changed over time. From an early policy laying claim to all the areas described as Palestine, the Palestinian position today is focused on the West Bank and Gaza. Even with this change, however, it is clear that Israeli and Palestinian positions collide over the same territory. The regional challenge in the Middle East involves the adjudication of legitimate but conflicting claims aimed at breaking the cycle of a violent past.

Global Fears: Success or failure at the regional level has global implications. The Middle East is one of the regions of the world where local conflict has the capacity to engage the superpowers. The political-moral problem of the Middle East involves, therefore, not only regional justice, but global **security**. The threat of proliferation of nuclear weapons, **ballistic** missiles and chemical weapons in the Middle East has only intensified the danger that a regional conflict would escalate to **international** proportions. indeed, it must also be acknowledged that a continuing source of danger in the Middle East has been and remains the conventional arms trade **fueled** by major countries outside the region -- including the United States - often for reasons of commercial profit as well as political and military **objectives**.

A stable **peace**, based on the just satisfaction of the needs of states and peoples in the region is required first of all because the citizens of the Middle East have suffered for too long. But peace there is also a requirement for the welfare of the citizens of the world. Regional justice and international security are joined in the Middle East.

II. **The NCCB and the Middle East**

The Middle East can be **analyzed** from many perspectives. In this statement we write as Catholic bishops, in our role as pastors and teachers. This **identity** shapes our approach to the issues of the Middle East.

We are bound by deep **ties** of faith to the Holy Land. the land of the Hebrew prophets, the land of Jesus' birth, ministry, passion, death and resurrection. These ties are the starting point of our reflection. As bishops in the universal Church, we are guided by the continuing engagement of Pope John Paul II **with** all the major questions of the Middle East. Building on the pastoral concern and policies of **his** predecessors, the Holy father consistently seeks to **lift** up before the international community the human. religious and moral dimensions of the Middle East.

By this statement we hope to foster the process described by the Holy Father: 'that *the* Israeli and Palestinian peoples, each loyally accepting the other and their legitimate aspirations, may find **a solution** that permits each of them to live in a homeland of their own, in freedom, dignity and security' (**L'Osservatore Romano**, English **edition**, **5 December** 1988). The statement also responds to Pope John Paul's determination to protect the Lebanese people and their country: We cannot resign ourselves to seeing that country deprived of its unity, territorial integrity sovereignty and independence. it is a question here of rights which are fundamental and incontestable for every nation' (**L'Osservatore Romano**, English edition, 13 Feb. 1989).

We are **also** bound by ties of solidarity **with** the leaders of the Christian **Communities** in the Middle East, many of whom signed the Statement by the Heads of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem (Appendix II), and those whom they serve. We are conscious of the crucial and **doubly** difficult **vocation** of the Christians in the **Middle** East. in almost all situations they **live** as a religious minority in a predominantly Islamic world, often under pressures of various kinds as they seek to **live their** faith. Yet they also have the possibility and the duty of living **their Christianity** in an interreligious context where they can witness to its value and share its resources **generously**.

In this statement we express our **solidarity with** these Christian communities of the **Middle** East, especially those in Lebanon, and demonstrate our concern through an effort aimed at enhancing the search for peace in **their** homelands.

We approach the Middle East question **conscious** of three different relationships. **each** of **which**

we value highly, all of which are pertinent to the quest for peace in the Middle East.

In the United States, we maintain relationships with both the Jewish and Islamic communities through our interreligious dialogue. Since the Second Vatican Council Jewish-Catholic dialogue has made major strides. Living with the largest Jewish community in the world, we have enjoyed extensive exchanges and deepening friendship leading to a fuller understanding of Judaism and our own faith.

Our relationships with Islamic communities in the United States are more recent, but they are expanding rapidly. As in the Catholic-Jewish dialogue, Catholic-Islamic interests range from explicitly religious issues to social questions, among which peace and justice in the Middle East has a special place. Here also the process of dialogue has enhanced our understanding of Islam and deepened our own sense of faith. Islamic-Christian dialogue is facilitated by the climate of respect for the religious convictions of others in the United States.

Finally, as bishops in the United States we are citizens of and religious leaders in a nation with a critical role in the Middle East. In terms of both the regional and the global significance of the Middle East, the United States role is always important and sometimes decisive.

The United States relationship with Israel has been a defining element of Middle East politics in the last forty years. The very prominence of the fact, in the Middle East and in the United States itself, often obscures the extensive relationship of the United States with virtually all of the Arab states. This important relationship has been significantly enhanced by the United States decision to open political discussions with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in December of 1999. The United States now has the opportunity to advance the peace process and to use its influence and relationships to foster a more extensive dialogue among Israel, the Palestinian people and the Arab states.

Public attention and discussion of the Middle East has been renewed because of the "Intifada" (i.e. the Palestinian uprising), the continuing tragedy of the hostages in Lebanon and the devastation occurring within Lebanon. We addressed the question of United States policy in the Middle East in 1973 and in 1978. We return to the topic in this statement because we believe that a possibility to build relationships of trust and shape a secure peace exists today in the Middle East.

As often happens in political affairs, a moment of opportunity is partly the product of conflict and suffering: this is surely the case in Lebanon, the West Bank and Gaza, in Israel as well as in the lives of the hostages. The suffering must be lamented but the moment of opportunity must be grasped. We are convinced that active, diplomatic engagement by the United States is needed to stimulate a new initiative for peace in the region of the Middle East. Past experience illustrates that sustained United States efforts, pursued at the highest level of government, can catalyze a peace process. . . .

We address these issues in light of the religious and moral dimensions at the heart of the Middle East. We offer these reflections as a contribution to the Catholic community and to the wider United States policy debate on the Middle East.

. . .

IV. Israel, the Arab States and the Palestinians: **Principles for Policy and Peace**

During the last forty years, it is possible to distinguish two levels of the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian question. One level involves Israel and the Arab states; this conflict has been at the forefront of the wars of 1946, 1966, 1967, and 1973. From this history emerged the formula of 'land for peace' in U.N. Resolution 242 (cf. Appendix I) which remains the diplomatic guideline for a lasting resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict. The goal of the formula, exemplified in the Israeli-Egyptian Peace Treaty (1979), would return captured lands in exchange for diplomatic recognition of Israel and an end to the state of belligerency by the Arab states.

A second level of the conflict is the Israeli-Palestinian question. While this issue, increasingly the focus of attention since 1973, is embedded in the larger Arab-Israeli relationship, it has taken on its own life, particularly in the light of the Intifada in the Israeli Occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza since December 1987.

A. Principles for Policy

The achievement of a lasting and comprehensive peace in the Middle East must address both levels of the problem. There can be no secure peace that does not eventually include full diplomatic relations between the Arab states and Israel. Anything short of this leaves the "legitimacy" of Israel undefined in the policy of the Arab states, and reinforces Israel's position that the only road to survival is one requiring vastly superior military power.

Negotiations are essential for both Israel and the Arab states. All have needs which can only be met in the context of a negotiated agreement, supported by other members of the international community. Israel has justifiably sought a clear declaration of its acceptance by its Arab neighbors. The time is long past when this basic element of international life should be affirmed for Israel.

The Arab states need negotiations to address territorial claims resulting from the wars of the last forty years. The bitter disputes about the Golan Heights, the West Bank and Gaza which have divided the Middle East for years must find a negotiated resolution which meets the justifiable claims of the Arab states.

the **security** requirements of Israel and the **long-denied rights** of the **Palestinian** people.

The **Israeli-Palestinian** question is **theoretically distinguishable** from the **first** set of issues, but it **cannot** be divorced from them. **Both** principles and public opinion bind the Arab states **to** make settlement of the Palestinian question an **intrinsic** part of **any** settlement with Israel. At the same **time** it is clear that the term 'Arab-Israeli' conflict is **insufficient** for defining the specific elements **of the Palestinian** question.

Unlike the formula adopted in U.N. Resolution 242, which **treated Palestinians as refugees**, the **situation today -- post-Rabat (1974)**, in light of the **intifada (1987-89)** and after United States-Palestine Liberation Organization talks (1988-89) -- requires independent **recognition** of the rights of the **Palestinian people** and a specific addressing of the issues **between Israel and the Palestinians**. More than the United Nations **Resolution 242 and 338 approach**, and the **Camp David approach**, in which **Palestinians** are in a secondary role, **is** needed for framing the Middle East **question today**.

Addressing both dimensions of the Israel-Arab Palestinian problem, we recommend the following **propositions**, rooted in a moral **assessment** of the problem and related to its **political** dimensions.

1. **Pope John Paul II's Proposal**: In a series of addresses and statements Pope John Paul II has framed a basic **perspective** in light of which diplomatic efforts should proceed toward a **settlement** of the **Israeli-Palestinian question**. The Holy **Father** has expressed the **perspective in diverse forms, but with** a constant **meaning: the fundamental right of both Israelis and Palestinians to a homeland**. On September 11, 1987, while addressing U.S. Jewish leaders in Miami, the Pope said:

Catholics **recognize among the elements** of the Jewish **experience** that Jews have a **religious attachment to the Land**, which **finds its roots in biblical tradition**. After the tragic extermination of the Shoah, the **Jewish people began a new period in their history**. They have a right to a homeland, as does any civil nation, **according to international law**. "For the Jewish people who **live in the State of Israel and who preserve in that land such precious testimonies to their history and their faith**, we must ask for the desired **security** and the due **tranquillity** that is the **prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society**" (*Redemptiois Anno*, 20 April 1984).

What has been **said about the right to a homeland also applies** to the Palestinian people, so many of whom remain homeless and refugees. **While all concerned must honestly reflect on the past, Muslims no less than Jews and Christians, it is time to forge those solutions which will lead to a just, complete and lasting peace in that area**. For this peace I earnestly pray (*Origins*, September 24, 1987).

The Holy Father **reiterated** this concern in his **Angelus** message of October 24, 1989:

From the Holy Land **pleas for help and solidarity are arriving from the inhabitants of the West Bank and Gaza**. They are the **cries of the entire people who are being particularly tried today, and who feel weaker after decades of conflict with another people bound by their history and faith to that same land**. One cannot be **indifferent to these pleas and to the daily suffering of so many people**. To them I should like to express my deepest **solidarity**, assuring them that the Pope continues to make **his own the legitimate request to live in peace in a homeland of their own, respecting the right of every other people to enjoy the necessary security and tranquillity**. Let us pray to **Almighty God** that he may inspire all those in authority to put an end as **soon as possible** to so much **suffering and that peace and harmony may be earnestly sought for that land which is holy for millions of believers: Christians, Jews and Muslims**.

On **December 23, 1988**, a Vatican press statement reiterated Pope John Paul ii's **view** of the problem: **'The supreme pontiff** repeated that he is deeply convinced that the two peoples have an **identical**, fundamental right to have their own homeland in **which** they **live** in freedom, dignity and security in harmony with **their** neighbors.'

The assertion that **each party**, Israel and the **Palestinian** people, has a fundamental right to a homeland, establishes the **framework** in **moral** terms for political **negotiations**. Because each party has a right to a homeland, the goal of negotiations should be **fulfillment** of the rights of both. Because the content of the right (territory with a **legitimately recognized** title to it) cannot be **realized** without each party **accepting** limits on its claim (how much **territory** each possesses), the classical **distinction** of affirming a right, then setting **limits** on its meaning and **exercise**, will **have** to guide negotiations.

The result of **recognizing** the **same** right in both parties, then **limiting** its extent to allow for **fulfillment** of both rights should work toward a settlement **which achieves** three objectives. First, **it** should formalize Israel's existence **as a** sovereign state in the eyes of the Arab states and the Palestinians; second, **it** should establish an Independent Palestinian homeland with its sovereign status recognized by Israel; **third**, there must be negotiated **limits** to the **exercise** of **Palestinian** sovereignty so that **it** is clear that Israel's security **is** protected. **These general goals** should be pursued through a process of negotiations in which appropriate guarantees for the objectives of **security, self-determination, sovereignty, and territory for each** party are **established**. We offer these objectives **not** to **limit** or **predetermine** the **process** or substance of negotiations, but to lay out key needs and requirements that ought to be addressed through good **faith** and serious **negotiations** between the parties. These objectives **build** upon and reflect **principles which** we have **advocated** in our statements of 1973 and 1978 and now reaffirm.

2. **Recognition of Israel's Right to Existence Within Secure Borders**: Both the United Nations Resolution 242 and the papal statements require this recognition as a means of resolving the 'security--territory' problem for **Israel**. In our **view**, this is a foundation stone for a just and stable peace. This issue is so central, **as a** matter of survival, in Israel's conception of its situation in the Middle East, **that** it is in everyone's interest for security **to** be guaranteed **politically**, strategically and **psychologically** for the **Israelis**. Secure borders are the means by which a nation's existence can **be** defended. The affirmation of Israel's rights to exist necessarily entails a **resolution** of the question of secure borders. Resolving the **issue**, however, will **require a** disciplined definition of what constitutes adequate **security**. Israel's security needs must **be reconciled with** **Palestinian** needs for self-determination. **The** resolution of the security-territory issue cannot be based on such an expansive definition of **security** for Israel **that** the fundamental **rights** of other parties (**especially** the **Palestinians** and the **neighboring** states) are preempted.

3. **Recognition of Palestinian Rights**: At the heart of the legitimate rights of the Palestinians is the right to **self-determination**, including their **option** for an independent homeland, another foundation stone of a just **peace**. **The** right to a homeland for the Palestinians is **tied to** **recognition** of other **rights**: (1) **their** right to **choose their** own **leadership** without intervention by others; (2) their **right to participate as** equals, **through representatives selected by** **Palestinians**, in all negotiations affecting their destiny; and (3) the right to a clear, **legitimated title** to **their territory**, not dependent on the **authority** of others.

The conclusion **which follows** from these assertions is as clear as it has been controversial: **Palestinian** representation in **Middle East negotiations** leading to **Palestinian territorial and political** sovereignty.

To draw **this** conclusion requires **recognizing limits** on **Palestinian rights: title** to a **territory** of their own **means disavowing** larger **claims** to other **territory** in Israel. **Coexistence with Israel requires** an **understanding** that **security is a** mutual term -- Palestinians will ensure secure possession of their homeland by being **clear** in word and deed about Israel's security and territory. There must be **limits** to the exercise of Palestinian sovereignty, so it is clear that Israel's security is **protected**. The nature of mutual **security**

requires a willingness by all parties to accept limits on the definition and exercise of their rights. Limits on Israel's definition of its security claims and on Palestinian pursuit of their territorial claims are complementary. Acceptance of limits is crucial to a conception of mutual security between the two peoples. In addition respect for each other's right to a homeland requires scrupulous observance by both parties of the principle of non-intervention.

It is important to emphasize that the solution of the Palestinian situation cannot rest simply on Israel. All the states in the region, as well as others in the international community, have a responsibility to help address the legitimate aspirations of the Palestinian people, and to seek an effective response to their expressed need for territory and sovereignty.

4. Fulfillment of United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338: These two resolutions still embody central principles for any lasting settlement in the Middle East. Other texts help to fill out the picture in light of changed and changing circumstances in the region, e.g., Egyptian-Israeli Peace Treaty (1979); Fez Summit (1982); the Kafat Statements (Dec. 1988), but they do not dispense with United Nations Resolutions 242 and 338.

The thrust of United Nations Resolution 242 is to assert the formula of land for peace, to secure acceptance of Israel by the other Middle East states, and to affirm the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.

5. Human Rights and Religious Freedom: This principle is crucial throughout the Middle East. Respect for human rights is a precondition for stable peace; this is a conviction which our episcopal conference has consistently affirmed (cf. A Word of Solidarity. A Call for Justice: A Statement in Religious Freedom in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, 1988). The very diversity of the religious communities in the region and the differences among political regimes means that constant vigilance about religious liberty is required. Moreover, it is critical to emphasize that religious freedom means not only respect for the personal conscience of believers, but also recognition of the rights of religious communities to worship, to establish and maintain churches and educational institutions and to sponsor social institutions. The Palestinians (Christian and Muslim) and the Israelis (Jewish, Christian and Muslim) can be an example of religious toleration and pluralism to all the world. In contrast to this hope we are deeply concerned by the threat posed to Christian and other communities in the Middle East by militant movements which often reject tolerance and pluralism.

Another threat to this principle is the existence of attitudes that deny the human dignity and human rights of persons because of their religion, race or nationality. Prejudice or bigotry in speech, behavior and the media against either Jews or Arabs intensify conflict in the region and inflame discussion of the Middle East in the broader world community. As the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission said in its January, 1989 document on Racism:

'Among the manifestations of systematic racial distrust, specific mention must once again be made of anti-Semitism. . . . Terrorist acts which have Jewish persons or symbols as their target have multiplied in recent years and show the radicalism of such groups.'

Anti-Arab prejudice, ethnic hatred and bigotry also clearly undermine the dignity and rights of Palestinians and other Arab people. Their humanity is assaulted by brutal stereotypes, unfounded generalizations and other traditional forms of prejudice. The search for peace in the Middle East must be guided by respect for the rights of all and opposition to every form of prejudice which denies the dignity of the human person.

6. Compensation for Past Losses: The long and destructive history of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle has left many with just claims for compensation. Both the Palestinians and the Israelis can

document these **claims**, and in our judgment the **claims** should be carefully reviewed and **met**. We are convinced that the achievement of a just political settlement would move many **states** and other **institutions** to **assist** this process legally and financially.

7. **The Status of Jerusalem**: The **city** of Jerusalem has been a contested issue in the **Arab-Israeli-Palestinian** question since 1948. Clearly the **ultimate status** of the **city** cannot be **settled** by **unilateral** measures.

Here we **reaffirm** and **support** the basic **principle** set forth by the Holy See on several occasions: (1) the sacred character of Jerusalem as a heritage for the Abrahamic faiths should be guaranteed; (2) religious freedom of persons and of communities should be safeguarded; (3) the rights acquired by the various **communities** regarding **shrines**, holy places, educational and **social** institutions must be ensured; and (4) the Holy **City's** special religious status and the shrines proper to **each** religion should be protected by "an appropriate **juridical** safeguard" which is **internationally** respected and guaranteed.

It is useful to **recognize** that these elements are not **fulfilled** by simply discussing who has sovereignty in Jerusalem, nor do these elements require **any** one particular form of jurisdiction or sovereignty. They neither demand nor exclude one **civil** power **exercising** sovereignty in the **city** of Jerusalem.

B. The Intifada

The **principles** just outlined find a specific reference in the Israeli-Palestinian question. It is this aspect of the Middle **East** that the **intifada** has pushed to the **center** of the moral and **political** agenda. For much of the last decade the Palestinian question has been overshadowed by the **Egyptian-Israeli negotiations**, the **hostage crises**, the Iran-Iraq war, the **Persian Gulf conflict** and the Lebanese war.

It was **precisely** when others seemed to ignore them that the Palestinians in the **Israeli occupied** territories of the West Bank and **Gaza** took matters into their own hands. Since December 1987 **Palestinians** have demanded that Israel, the United States, the Arab states and the **international community** pay attention to them **again**. The **intifada** has been an **effort** to recast the policy agenda in the Middle East.

There are several possible ways to interpret the **significance** of this event of the **intifada**. Here, its political, psychological and human rights **significance** strike us as **important** to **highlight**. **Politically**, the **intifada** is a statement that after more than twenty years of military **occupation** the Palestinians refuse to accept this status. The essence of the Palestinian **claim** is that the present political **situation** in the **Israeli** occupied territories rests upon an **injustice**, a **denial** of fundamental human **rights**.

Psychologically, the pressing of their **political** position through the **intifada** has **provided** a new sense of **political self-determination** and **solidarity** for a whole generation of **Palestinians**. The central theme **which needs** to be **lifted** up and repeated is that the **intifada** is a cry for justice; it is a cry for personal and **political identity**; it is an **expression** of the personal and political rights **which Palestinians** have as human beings **worthy** of **being** respected as individuals and as a people.

The scope and **duration of the intifada** have created the strongest challenge yet mounted against **Israel's** military rule in the West Bank and **Gaza** since 1967. The Government of Israel has recognized the fundamental **political** challenge posed by the **intifada** and it has responded by attempting to suppress it. The United States Government's human rights **report** **concisely** captures the response. The **Israeli** Government sees the **intifada** not **simply** as a civil **disturbance**, but, 'as a new phase of the 40 year war against Israel and as a threat to the security of the state' (**Country Reports**, p. 1377). **Israeli** concerns about this security threat **coexist** with their need to maintain public order in the face of the newly aroused Palestinian resistance.

the measures taken in this "war" have produced the strongest human rights criticism -- inside and outside of Israel -- in the twenty-two years of occupation.

The United States Government's Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988 documents several principal categories of human rights violations including but not limited to: (1) excessive use of force resulting in many Palestinian deaths; (2) physical abuse and beatings of prisoners and of others not directly involved in demonstrations; (3) demolition and sealing of homes; (4) closing of educational institutions; and (5) arbitrary arrest, detention and exile.

Of particular concern to us as bishops is the April, 1989 statement of the heads of Christian communities in Jerusalem describing their peoples' experience of constant deprivation of their fundamental rights, and tragic and unnecessary loss of Palestinian lives, especially among minors: 'In Jerusalem, on the West Bank and in Gaza our people experience in their daily lives constant deprivation of their fundamental rights because of arbitrary actions deliberately taken by the authorities. Our people are often subjected to unprovoked harassment and hardship' (cf. Appendix II).

The precise adjudication of distinct human rights claims is open to continuous review, but the deeper political question -- the justice and legitimacy of Palestinian demands for territory and sovereignty -- is the fundamental issue posed by the intifada. It is precisely the political foundation of the intifada, a reality acknowledged both by the Palestinians and the Israelis, which gives it special significance. It is for this reason that the intifada is chosen here for attention among the many serious human rights issues in the Middle East.

V. United States Policy: Recommendations

We have had United States policy in mind throughout this statement since we write as bishops of the United States. The purpose of this section, however, is to draw out more specifically a set of recommendations for United States policy in light of the assessment we have made of the Middle East. Our concern here is to relate the moral principles found within this statement to specific choices in the United States policy discussion. By definition these specific judgments are open to debate and to amendment in light of changes in the Middle East.

What is not open to debate is the need to move forward in the Middle East peace process. The status quo is untenable for the peoples of the Middle East and the broader world community. The method of progress must be dialogue -- it is the tested alternative to violence. Pope John Paul II has described the dynamic of dialogue which can lead to peace: 'I exhort that consideration with sincere good will be given to every positive and constructive gesture that may come from either party. The road of dialogue in the search for peace is certainly arduous and tiring, but each obstacle that is removed can be considered true progress, certainly worthy of inspiring other corresponding gestures and the needed confidence to proceed' (*L'Osservatore Romano*, English edition 5 December 1988).

The specific policy recommendations we make in this section are all designed to enhance a movement toward dialogue, promoting confidence among the parties and removing obstacles in the search for a just peace. The recommendations highlight the role of the United States, but the appeal to a broader dialogue involves in the first instance the parties to the conflict in the Middle East. The key to successful political dialogue will be Palestinians willing to discuss secure boundaries and stable political relations with Israel, and Israelis willing to discuss territory and sovereignty with Palestinians; successful

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political **dialogue** will require **both** states to assure **Israeli** legitimacy and security, and it **will** require **Israeli** commitment to land for peace. The Israel-Egypt negotiations of the 1970's provide a model for successful dialogue. They also **highlight** the essential **role** of the United States in **fostering** such **negotiations**.

Presently there are several proposals to **begin negotiations** advocated by different **parties**. The **Israeli** government **advanced** a proposal on May 14, 1989. President **Mubarak** of Egypt has offered **recommendations which** build upon the **Israeli** plans. The **Mubarak plan is a creative initiative** designed to expand upon other **initiatives** and to transcend both procedural and **substantive obstacles**. Palestinian **representatives** and other states have called for an International **conference** as the forum for Middle East negotiations.

Without entering a **discussion** of these proposals our purpose **is** to **urge consideration** of them and to reiterate our **conviction that dialogue and negotiation are the road to peace in the Middle East**.

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The United States **is positioned to help** break the **political** impasse in the **Middle East**. It cannot **substitute** for others, but it can **assist** them. Our recommendations **are** offered to urge more **active diplomatic** engagement by the United States in the **process of seeking and making peace in the Middle East**.

A. The United States - Soviet Relationship in the Middle East

One of the elements **which** leads us to **believe** there **is** a new moment -- indeed an open moment. In the **Middle East is the possibility** for constructive **change** in the United States - Soviet **relationship**.

For many years the **Soviet** Union has been at the **margin** of **Middle East** developments. Recent **Soviet statements** seem to **suggest that the Soviet 'new thinking' on foreign policy is not satisfied to stay at the margin**. At the same **time** the **tenor** and themes of **Soviet** statements **indicate a willingness to play a more constructive role in the region**.

It is evident that superpower rivalry in the past forty years has **intensified the** danger of the **Middle East** and has made **resolution of key issues** very **difficult**. **If a shift of orientation allows a more coordinated superpower approach to the region, the change should be welcomed and pursued**.

The **perspective which should guide the superpowers is one which gives priority to the welfare of the local states and people**. It should not be an imposition of **superpower views on weaker states**.

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C. The United States, the Palestinians and the Intifada

The fact of the intifada demands, on both moral and political grounds, a more creative and constructive response by the United States government.

Human rights violations should be addressed in light of United States policy and legislation on human rights. The **assessment** of the situation found in **the Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988** is a solid beginning and should be taken into account in the implementation of **United States policy**.

As noted above, the intifada points beyond human rights questions to the deeper political issue of Palestinian rights to a homeland. In our discussion of principles for policy we have set forth what we believe is needed to address the **security**, sovereignty and territory issue between the Israelis and Palestinians. The United States should: (1) **continue** its **political** discussions with the Palestinians and raise the level of this exchange; and (2) clearly express its support for a **Palestinian** homeland and Palestinian political rights. At the same time the United States role should be to obtain **Palestinian clarification** of the December **declaration** accepting Israel's existence and the terms of United Nations Resolutions 242 and **338**. Such discussions could lead, in turn, to broader diplomatic talks with both Israelis (clarifying their acceptance of 242 and 338) and **Palestinians about** measures needed to guarantee secure borders for both **parties**. This can also lead to more specific discussion of how the Palestinians and Israelis **would** see the measures needed to build trust and **confidence** between the two peoples.

The United States should continue to press with the **Palestinians** the **principles** affirmed by John Paul II: that dialogue is the road to peace in the Middle East, **'while** excluding any form of recourse to weapons and violence and above all, terrorism and reprisals' (**L'Osservatore Romano**, December, **1988**).

The relevance of this principle extends, in our view, to **all** parties in the Middle East. The people of the region have too long been subject to **the scourge of** war, to a repeated pattern of violence and to acts of terrorism which inevitably strike the innocent and the vulnerable in **civilian populations**. Such acts of terrorism have neither moral nor **political justification** and should be condemned without **qualification**.

D. The United States and Israel

United **States support for Israel** is basically a sound, **justified** policy, in the interests of both nations and can **contribute to** the **progress** needed in the **Middle East** to produce peace for Israel, its Arab neighbors and **the Palestinians**. United States support for Israel, politically, strategically and morally, should be continued. **This proposition** does not conflict with the need for the United States to maintain its **own position on a range of issues**, at times in **opposition** to Israel, nor does it conflict with concern for human **rights**. For example, the United States regards the **Israeli** settlements in the West **Bank** as legally **problematic** and an impediment to peace.

As **bishops** we **believe** that United States aid to Israel, **as** to other states, should have as its purpose the **pursuit** of peace **with justice** for all people.

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E. The United States and the Arab States

The **political** settlement of the Middle East requires, as we have said, stable, just relations between Israel and the Arab states, as well as settlement of the **Israeli-Palestinian** question.

While United States **relations** with the Arab states vary across a spectrum, there is substantial influence with many of the key **states**. The United States should **continue** to encourage, persuade and press Israel's neighbors to **normalize** relations with Israel within the context of **negotiations** for **settling** the Arab-Israeli-Palestinian **conflicts**.

The history of four major wars, the needs of the Arab states themselves and the **'act** that Israeli **willingness** to address **Palestinian** concerns is contingent upon the **attitude** of Arab states toward Israel, all point to the need to **'normalize'** the political map of the Middle East.

The history of **the Middle East** In the past forty years has been marked by failure of the Arab states as well to respond adequately to **Palestinian** needs and aspirations. Today there is clearly a consensus of moderate Arab states which is seeking a settlement of the Palestinian question based on land for peace. The United States should encourage this consensus and press Israel to see and grasp this moment of opportunity.

VI. Conclusion

It is our conviction that a truly open moment for peace exists **in** the Middle East, and that the United States has an indispensable role to play in the peace process which has moved us to write this statement. As religious leaders, it **is** our hope and our prayer that this moment **will** be seized, that our **nation** will meet its responsibilities to advance the cause of peace.

To **grasp** the open **moment**, to transform the **potential** for peace into a real process for peace **will** **require** the best **efforts** of many institutions, communities and individuals. In this statement, we have found it necessary to probe some of the complexity of the **Middle East** in order to highlight the moral principles and problems which **lie** at the **heart** of the Middle East **question**.

We believe, however, that even beyond the **political** and moral **intricacy** of the Middle East there is a deeper **reality** which **must be recognized** and relied upon in the pursuit of a just peace. The deeper reality is the **pervasive religious** nature of the Middle East: its territory, history and its peoples have been visited by God **in a unique way**. The religious foundations of the Middle East have **political** and moral relevance. The **search for** peace in the region **requires** the best resources of reason, but it also should rely upon the **faith**, prayer and **convictions** of the **religious traditions** which call the Middle East their home.

True peace cannot effectively be **built with** new **policies and** guarantees alone. True peace **also** requires the building of trust between peoples, even when history **divides** them. Steps are needed now to encourage greater dialogue, to deepen trust, to build confidence between the diverse peoples of the Middle East. As **believers**, as people of faith, we find in our three **religious traditions** the resources for mutual trust and hope, the call to reach across **political**, religious, ethnic and **geographic** boundaries, and the summons to work for peace.

Above all else, the achievement of a just and lasting peace is a grace and gift of God. Although

human peacemakers have their essential roles -- and are blessed by Muslims, Christians, and Jews -- ultimately peace comes as a work of God in history.

We request the prayers of all believers for peace in the Middle East. In The Challenge of Peace (1983) we called on our people for prayer, fasting and Friday abstinence for the sake of peace. Here we renew that call with special reference to the Middle East.

We also pledge continuing dialogue with our Jewish and Muslim partners and friends. In our three religious traditions, we share two central themes: the capacity for hope in the face of difficulty and danger and the pursuit of peace in the face of conflict and violence. Let us together seek to turn our hopes into true progress toward genuine and lasting peace.

ANNEX II

POSITION PAPER ON THE MIDDLE EAST
BY THE
CANADIAN COUNCIL OF CHURCHES

Approved by the General Board, 13 October 1989,

Introduction:

The General Board of the Canadian Council of Churches includes representatives of sixteen member churches of Protestant, Catholic and Orthodox traditions. We recognize that Christians are called to a concern for justice for all. Consequently, the Board has often spoken on behalf of victims of violence and injustice around the world.

The Middle East today is a region in crisis and in conflict. People of the various nations of the region and of different religious faiths are victims of violence and injustice. In our awareness of the human suffering caused by the conflicts of the Middle East we cannot, in conscience, be silent.

We are able to state a position on the situation of the Middle East, however, only in deliberate acknowledgement of our special relation to the people and places of the Middle East. We speak, therefore, in full awareness of the following facts:

A. As Christians we have common roots with the Jewish people. Since the Christian Church emerged with an identity distinct from Judaism, however, our relationship with the 'continuing Jewish community has not been a happy one. We recognize the great suffering that Christian anti-Judaism has caused to the Jewish community and we recognize our Christian culpability in the events that have led to the present crisis.

B. As Christians we have a common heritage with, and a long history of relationship to Islam. As is the case with Judaism, Christian relationships with Islamic communities often have not been happy. We recognize that Islamic communities in the Middle East still remember the violence and injustice inflicted by Western Christians in the Crusades.

C. As Christian churches, we have close relations with churches in the Middle East itself. Our Orthodox members are closely related to the Orthodox churches in the region. The Maronites in Lebanon and other groups in the area are in full communion with the Roman Catholic Church. Many of our Protestant and Anglican members have counterparts in the Middle East. The Council itself is in close contact with the Middle East Council of Churches. Because of these relationships, we have gained an appreciation for

the enduring witness of the churches of the Middle East.

D. The region itself holds a special significance for us. With Muslims and Jews, we have special memories of the area. The Biblical stories, the very events upon which the Christian tradition is founded, are connected to the very places which are now the scene of this conflict.

Acknowledging our special relationship to the people and places of the Middle East and in recognition of our common culpability in the historical roots of this conflict, we make this statement of our concern. It is presented here in a spirit of reconciliation, and with the hope that it will contribute to a deeper understanding of the issues that have shaped the contemporary Middle East, and the people who live there, whose earnest hopes for peace deserve our attention and constructive effort.

1. Overview:

We lament the sad paradox that the region which is the birthplace of the three Abrahamic faiths, faiths that speak of a God of justice, mercy and peace, is today the scene of so much human anguish. The peoples of the Middle East have long suffered from hardships caused by war, repression, terrorism, and civil strife. At least four distinct conflicts can be identified, and each of these, though inter-related to some degree, grows from its own deep-rooted history of injustice which has given rise to suspicion and alienation. Periods of peace are experienced only as the absence of active hostilities; there is as yet no sign of a regional peace settlement which would permit the various peoples and differing faith groups to live together in harmony. The Middle East remains a challenge to peacemakers and all those who seek justice.

We regret the violation of human rights in many of the countries of the region. Many states lack political structures which would allow for dissenting voices, and opposition therefore finds expression in violent acts whose victims are often the most vulnerable members of society. In much of the region, chronic poverty and underdevelopment creates the soil from which succeeding generations reap crops of vengeance and despair.

We note the rise of religious fundamentalism in all the region's faiths, and lament the intolerance which this breeds, intolerance towards those of other faiths, and towards other branches of the same faith. We particularly regret the role of those who carry a Western-style fundamentalist Christianity to the region where it is an alien and disruptive presence, discrediting the witness of indigenous Christians. We earnestly hope that

representatives of **these groups will accept** the offer of dialogue put forward by the **Middle East Council of Churches** in the interest of **developing a cooperative approach to mission**.

We rejoice that the improvement in relations between the super-powers has provided **an opportunity to loosen the deadlock in** relationships between **the regions' states**. We pray for all people of goodwill who **are working toward a resolution** of the conflicts, and **a new era of peace for the region**. We celebrate the witness of our partners **as they carry out works of mercy and reconciliation in Christ's name** for those who suffer **as a result of war and oppression**, regardless of their faith, and **we pay tribute to the many generous acts of charity performed by those of other faiths**. These are the signs of hope which point the way to **a brighter future**.

2. The Churches of the Middle East:

We recognize **that** the lands within the Middle East **are lands of revelation and of holiness**. For Christian churches around the world the **land** described in Scripture, the lands known to the Old Testament Patriarchs, and to the Apostles, and particularly the lands where Jesus carried out His **earthly** ministry must hold **special significance**.

Many of the churches of the Middle East date from the First Century. Some Canadian churches are in direct communion with these **ancient churches: others have come to know them as friends and partners in the world-wide ecumenical family**. We give thanks for their continued presence and witness in the **region**, in which **we see a reflection of their vigorous response to the challenge of living the Gospel in that part of the world**. The Church everywhere shares a responsibility to uphold and support the **ministry of the churches in the Middle East, particularly the ministry of reconciliation towards peace**. In this regard, we especially uphold the work of the **Middle East Council of Churches which is a significant representation of the presence and witness of Christians in the Middle East**.

3. Canada and the Middle East:

Over the years the Canadian government has attempted to be **constructive and even-handed in its policy towards the conflicts in the Middle East**. Although Canadian actions have not always been as even-handed as the policy would indicate, there is a perception in the region that Canada is **fair-minded and sincerely concerned to promote peace**. Canadians can take pride in, for example, the **work of Canadian troops in peace-keeping forces over the years in Cyprus, the Sinai, Lebanon, the Golan Heights, and Jerusalem**. We recognize with appreciation the humanitarian aid provided by the

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Canadian International Development Assistance (CIDA) for the relief **of suffering in the region.** We urge the Canadian government to use its position in the region in support of diplomatic initiatives for peace negotiations.

In our lifetimes, we have seen an increasing flow of people travelling, as visitors and as emigrants, from the Middle East to Canada, and, especially in the case of Israel, from Canada to the Middle East. Many have come to Canada from Middle East countries which are tormented by political instability, economic troubles, and growing extremism: they have contributed to Canadian society in many ways. In particular, they have brought diversity to the Canadian church community, and several churches with roots in the Middle East now belong to the Canadian Council of Churches. Members of these churches have direct family links with the region.

Thousands of Canadian church people each year travel to the Middle East on Holy Land tours. It is regrettable that this opportunity rarely leads to an encounter with the life of the local churches: guided tours lead pilgrims quickly through the Biblical sites, and there is neither time nor opportunity for meeting Arab Christians.

We note that the Canadian churches have participated in service programmes in the Middle East, providing support for the Middle East Council of Churches' Department of Service to Palestine Refugees, and its Emergency Relief and Rehabilitation Programme in Lebanon.

These contacts and involvements of the Canadian churches with the region led to the sending of a delegation from the Canadian churches to the Middle East in September 1987. This experience contributed to a strengthening of ties between the Canadian Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, and a deepened understanding of the complexity of the issues facing the region.

4. The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict:

A major conflict in the region is that between Israel and the Arab states, which has at its core the painful struggle between Israelis and Palestinians over one land. This is a conflict between two rights: on the one hand, the rights of the Jewish people to a recognized homeland with safe and secure borders, and on the other, the right of the Palestinians to self-determination; including the right of establishing a sovereign Palestinian homeland. Neither people can claim its human and political rights at the expense of the other. Forty years of war and reprisals have surely shown that the only real and lasting solution will come, not from military strength, but from a negotiated solution based on justice and a shared recognition of the rights and aspirations of

both parties.

Since December, 1987, the intifada of the Palestinians living under Israeli occupation has altered the shape of the conflict. Young Palestinians have illustrated the depth of their despair in the present **tragic situation**, and given irrefutable proof of the **sacrifices they are willing to make for their cause**.

We are grieved both by the suffering of the Palestinian people whose human rights are being daily **violated** by the Israeli authorities, and by the **dilemma in which the Israeli people now find themselves**. The policy the present **government of Israel** believes essential for the security of the country stands in sharp contradiction to its founding principles. We applaud the efforts of **peace groups in the area**, particularly among Jews and Palestinians in Israel who have struggled, **against** great odds, to build bridges of understanding in the interest of reconciliation, justice and peace for both communities.

We affirm that a comprehensive settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must **recognize** the rights and concerns of both parties. A resolution of this core issue is a key to resolving the wider conflict between Israel and the Arab states.

We therefore affirm that the basis for a peaceful settlement is found in UN Security Resolutions 242 and 338, with revisions which would take into **account** changes which have occurred since 1967. The principles found in these resolutions would ensure:

1. the withdrawal of Israel's **armed- forces** from territories occupied in 1967, and the recognition by all the states in the region of Israel's right to exist.
2. the right of all states, including Israel and the Arab states, to live in peace with secure and **recognized** borders.
3. the implementation of the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, including the right of **establishing a** sovereign Palestinian state.

While the **second** principle **explicitly** requires all the states in the region to **recognize** Israel's right to a secure existence, the **third** affirms that the Palestinians have the right to **determine** their own future, including the establishment of a sovereign state.

We affirm that this conflict **cannot be** resolved through force, but only through peaceful means. We strongly support the call for a UN-sponsored peace conference as envisioned by UN General Assembly Resolutions 38/58C and 43/176. Negotiations within this framework should include all those parties most intimately involved: Israel, the Palestinian Liberation Organization, and the

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neighbouring Arab states. Any negotiations to resolve this conflict must involve the superpowers: the active support of the United States and the Soviet Union is vital if such negotiations are to succeed. In this light, we welcome indications of improving relationships between the Soviet Union and Israel,

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a. Jerusalem:

We affirm that the status of Jerusalem is an important issue in itself, quite separate from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and so merits particular attention.

In our view, the Israeli annexation of East Jerusalem is a violation of international law.

Jerusalem is a Holy City for the three Abrahamic faiths, and there should be no attempt to minimize its importance for any of these three communities. Dialogue among Christians, Muslims, and Jews can deepen our understanding of this profound religious attachment to Jerusalem.

We affirm the vital importance of free access for members of all three religious traditions to the holy places in Jerusalem.

As Christian churches we are concerned at the dwindling Christian population in Jerusalem because of widespread emigration. We believe that a continuing Christian presence and witness in Jerusalem is of importance to the whole Christian church.

9. A role for churches in Canada:

We uphold in our prayers the churches of the Middle East as they continue to respond to new challenges in the midst of grave difficulties. We pray for the healing of the wounds among the nations of the region, and affirm the efforts of all people of good will who continue the work of reconciliation and peacemaking.

Our government would be enabled to make stronger and more constructive initiatives in the region if it were responding to better informed and articulate public opinion. The churches can assist by raising the level of public awareness about the area. In particular they should undertake to build greater awareness among their people concerning the two conflicting rights in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, coupling a recognition of the urgency and justice of the Palestinian cause, with a parallel-recognition of Israel's right to a peaceful and secure existence. , , ,

We **also** affirm the **importance** of dialogue between the faith **groups** *in* Canada. As the process of dialogue strengthens the **ties** of trust and understanding among Christians, Jews and Muslims in this country, **we** may begin to **share** with each other our **differing** perspectives on the Middle East. Our hope and **prayer** is that each party in such a dialogue **will** receive an **open** hearing from the others, and, through **listening** to the others, find its own understanding enriched.
