

May 14, 2003

### **Road Map Peace Plan Is Boosted by Congressional Letter**

**ISSUE:** There is a Congressional initiative that needs and deserves your urgent advocacy. The Congress has consistently opposed putting pressure on Israel and has frequently chosen to denigrate and punish the Palestinians by means of legislative language and letters to the President. In what appears to be a significant and constructive change, a "Dear Colleague" letter is now circulating seeking Congressional signers on a letter to the President applauding the release of the Road Map. The lineup of co-sponsors of the letter is an unusual and bipartisan mix of members, some who have been open to Palestinian perspectives and some who have been strong supporters of Israel. Most noteworthy is the powerful chair of the House International Relations Committee Henry Hyde, who was also a cosponsor of the AIPAC (American-Israel Public Affairs Committee) initiated letter that garnered the signatures of 313 representatives last month.

**ACTION:** Call or fax your Representative and ask him or her to sign onto the "Support the Road Map letter" that is cosponsored by Hyde, Capps, Issa and Price. To reach the Washington office of any Representative, call the Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask for the member by name. This letter will be delivered soon, so you should call today.

**BACKGROUND:** The "Road Map" is a plan developed by what is being called the "Quartet" - the United States, the United Nations, the European Union and the Russian Federation. The release of the plan was delayed for many months, but its contents were widely known before its release on April 30 following considerable pressure on President Bush from his British ally Tony Blair. The Road Map, in seven pages, lays out parallel concessions by both Israel and the Palestinians as they move toward a final settlement by 2005. This is the first major Middle East peace initiative after more than two years of raging violence and Israel's reoccupation of the land that had been turned over to the Palestinian Authority during the Oslo process.

The AIPAC-organized letter, that was delivered in mid-April before the release of the Road Map, emphasized Israel's demand for a sequential implementation of the peace plan. Israel's Prime Minister Sharon, who refused to tell Secretary of State Powell that he accepted the Road Map, will be meeting with President Bush in Washington soon.

The "Support the Road Map" letter is a positive development in its own right. For the President to stay engaged in the implementation of this internationally-supported initiative, broad and persistent support will be necessary. The PCUSA has already encouraged the President's engagement and urged a fair and evenhanded implementation of the Road Map peace plan. The Rev. Clifton Kirkpatrick, Stated Clerk of the General Assembly, along with the leaders of other national churches and church agencies sent a letter to the President and the Members of Congress on May 14.

The "Support the Road Map" letter follows:

"We applaud your recent release of the 'Roadmap to Peace' as well as your statements underscoring your personal commitment to ending the violence between the Palestinian and Israeli people. We join you in noting with satisfaction the appointment of a new Palestinian Prime Minister with real authority. We hope that this change in the Palestinian governance structure will enhance the ability of a new Palestinian leadership to deliver lasting reforms.

"It is important for the Palestinian people to take the initial steps required of them in the Road Map to fully establish a new government that is not compromised by terrorism. They must build government institutions that are transparent and accountable, overhaul the security apparatus so that it truly fights terrorism rather than encourages it, and aggressively work toward an end to violence.

"The new Palestinian government appears to be taking the first of many steps toward achieving these goals. We are heartened by the Prime Minister's address to the Palestinian Legislative Council, in which he unequivocally denounced terrorism in all its forms. In addition, we are cautiously optimistic that the preliminary institutional changes to the Palestinian security forces and finance ministry will lead to dramatic and positive permanent changes. We are particularly encouraged by the initial steps that have been taken to make the Palestinian financial system transparent and accountable.

"Along with changes on the Palestinian side, we share your belief that the Roadmap must also be implemented by Israel, with the end goal, as you have stated many times, "two states living side-by-side" in peace and security.

"Again, we commend you for your unwavering commitment to building a new peace in the Middle East. We look forward to working with you in bringing about lasting change to this troubled part of the world."

By Corinne Whitlatch  
Churches for Middle East Peace

General Assembly

From "On Urging Sustainable Peace Between Israelis and Palestinians"

The 214<sup>th</sup> General Assembly:

1. Urges all parties involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to work toward a just, sustainable peace by
  - a. ending all forms of violence by Israelis and Palestinians alike;
  - b. implementing the Arab League proposal, essentially the same as United Nations Security Council Resolution 242, calling for full Arab recognition of Israel and Israel's withdrawal from the Occupied Territories;
  - c. an affirmation by Israel that it will work with Palestinians toward the establishment of a viable, contiguous Palestinian state with the same sovereign rights as those of the State of Israel;
  - d. establishing an international peacekeeping force to help provide security for all people as long as needed;
  - e. ending Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Gaza;
  - f. striving for a negotiated agreement, under U.N. supervision, for a shared Jerusalem by the two peoples (Palestinians and Israelis) and three faiths (Jewish, Christian, Muslim); and
  - g. get the commitment by Israel to address justly the issue of the right of return for Palestinian refugees.
  
2. Directs the Stated Clerk to send the above statement to the president of the United States, the secretary of state, the chairpersons of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and the House Committee on International Relations, the secretary general of the United Nations, the Government of Israel, the Palestinian Authority, the secretary general of the Arab League, the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A., the World Council of Churches, the Middle East Council of Churches, the Vatican, and other interested parties as the Stated Clerk deems appropriate. (Minutes, 2002, Part I, p. 734-735)