

# Toward Peace in the Middle East: Perspectives, Principles, and Hopes

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*A Statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops*

November 1989

## Introduction

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 notion 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 U.S. 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; 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 rather an understanding that people of goodwill 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 that 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 that 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 are related to its unique blend of religious and political history. Because it is the birth-place 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 that 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, injudicious 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 that 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 levels, therefore, the Middle East poses a major moral and political challenge.

*The Region.* The region, in fact, contains several distinct political conflicts. The 1980s have vividly demonstrated the destructive capacities resident in the Middle East; the carnage of the Iran-Iraq war (including the use of children as foot soldiers and the resurgence of chemical warfare), as well as the devastation of Lebanon, both testify to multiple sources of conflict in the region.

An adequate analysis of the Middle East must be grounded in a recognition of the distinct kinds of conflict that run through the area.

At the same time, it is possible to identify a crucial issue that 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 have 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."<sup>1</sup> 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 to or take refuge. Israel represents for the Jewish community the hope of a place of security and safety in a world that 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 fulfillment 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 million 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 realize 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 National Conference of Catholic Bishops 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."<sup>2</sup> The statement also responds to Pope John Paul II'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."<sup>3</sup>

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*, 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, Catholic-Jewish 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 have 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 U.S. role is always important and sometimes decisive.

The relationship of the United States 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 U.S. decision to open political discussions with the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) in December of 1988. 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 have 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 U.S. 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 U.S. efforts, pursued at the highest level of government, can catalyze a peace process. In this statement, we focus on two aspects of the wider Middle East picture: the fate of Lebanon and the Israeli-Arab-Palestinian question. Our concern is to examine these issues in light of the challenge they pose for the Church in the United States and for U.S. policy.

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 U.S. policy debate on the Middle East.

## **II. Lebanon: The Tragedy and the Crime**

In a region that has long known war, death, and suffering, the case of Lebanon in the last fifteen years still stands out as particularly horrifying. Since 1975, over 100,000 Lebanese have been killed in a nation of 4 million; in recent months, thousands were killed or wounded in the constant shelling that left Beirut devastated and depopulated. The statistics convey some of the horror of the war in Lebanon. The tragedy lies first of all in the loss of human life, but also in the contrast between what Lebanon could have been and could be in the Middle East and what it is. Because the Middle East requires that political and religious convictions be continuously balanced, Lebanon has stood for over forty years as a daring experiment. From the time of the National Pact in 1943, the effort to weave various religious traditions into a form of democratic governance has been pursued with determination in Lebanon. The process had major flaws, and the description of the system was always better than its performance, but the Lebanese experiment in interreligious comity and democratic governance held a unique place in the Middle East. The present disintegration of both the religious and political dimensions of Lebanese society is an incalculable loss for the Middle East. As Pope John Paul II said, in his appeal to the followers of Islam:

The eyes of the whole world behold a ravaged land, where human

life no longer seems to count. The victims are the Lebanese themselves—Moslems and Christians—and day after day the ruins on Lebanese soil become ever more numerous. As children of the God of mercy, who is our creator and guide but also our judge, how can we believers allow ourselves to remain indifferent to a whole people which is dying before our very eyes?<sup>4</sup>

There are several causes that contributed to the terror and tragedy of Lebanon in the 1980s. It is possible to distinguish internal and external reasons for the dissolution of the Lebanese state and society. Typically, Lebanese stress the external elements, and outside observers assign major responsibility to the Lebanese themselves. However the balance is struck, both dimensions are necessary for an understanding of Lebanon in the 1970s and 1980s.

Internally, the description often given of Lebanon is that it has been the scene of what many people perceive to be a "religious war" since 1975. The reality is more complex. It is not possible to understand Lebanon apart from its religious rivalries, but it is not accurate to analyze the Lebanese conflict exclusively through a religious prism. In addition, unfortunately, many groups responsible for violence are identified, or choose to be identified, by a religious label.

The National Compact of 1943, an unwritten agreement formulated by Lebanese Christians and Muslim leaders at the time of independence, sought to achieve a balance of religious freedom and religious participation in Lebanese society for seventeen different religious groups in the country. Part of the agreement was to confirm the assignment of constitutional offices to different religious constituencies: the president was to be a Maronite; the prime minister was to be a Sunni; the speaker of the parliament was to be a Shiite. There was also a system of proportional representation in parliament. The system survived and succeeded to a degree not often acknowledged from the perspective of the 1980s. Its success should not be forgotten amidst the destruction of these past years in Lebanon.

But the system did fail to adapt and to accommodate political changes within key groups in Lebanon. Political and economic reforms were urgently needed, but not undertaken. The failure to

address internal reform, the inability of the political leadership (Christian and Muslim) to shape a viable constitutional consensus, and the presence of armed Palestinians opened the way for the Lebanese political, economic, and religious controversy to get caught up in open military conflict, beginning in 1975 and continuing in much intensified form in 1989.

Internal factors alone cannot account for the history of Lebanon since 1975. The external causes of Lebanese conflict are essentially the projection of the major rivalries of the Middle East into Lebanon. The country has become the battleground of the region. The fact that there were Lebanese parties willing to strike deals with the outsiders must be acknowledged, but it does not diminish the point. Lebanon has been devastated from within and without.

In the 1970s, Palestinians were granted refuge and support by the Lebanese. Some Palestinians then tried to construct an autonomous base of operations from Lebanese soil, thereby threatening Lebanon's external relations and helping to shred its internal cohesion. In the early conflict of Lebanese and Palestinians, the Syrians entered Lebanon; they came at the invitation of other Arab states, but they have long ago outlived their welcome.

The limited legitimacy of Syria's initial intervention is exhausted; *yet*, it still has the capacity to play a positive role in relation to Lebanon. There is no long-term answer to Lebanon's predicament that does not include Syrian military withdrawal.

The other major intervention in Lebanon is that of Israel. The Israeli invasion in 1982, undertaken for Israel's purposes with the support of some Lebanese factions, did not end Israel's involvement in Lebanon. Israeli forces, with the cooperation of some Lebanese, continue to control part of southern Lebanon.

Another tragic and complicating factor is the holding of innocent hostages by groups and states. While the fate of U.S. hostages is understandably most on our minds and in our hearts and those of all Americans, it is no less tragic that hundreds of Lebanese citizens have also been taken hostage. The international community must condemn these unjust and unjustifiable actions

and work to bring about the prompt release of all hostages.

Pope John Paul II powerfully described what is at stake in Lebanon in his Angelus Message of August 15, 1989:

What is happening before everyone's eyes is the responsibility of the whole world. It is a process that is bringing on the destruction of Lebanon.

Truly, we are confronted with a menace to the whole of international life. It is a moral menace, all the more painful because it is a weaker State that endures the violence or the indifference of stronger ones. In fact, the principle according to which it is not lawful to harm the weak, to kill the weak, is valid also in international life. Who so behaves is guilty not only before God, the supreme Judge, but also before the justice of human history.

Moral guilt weighs also on all those who, in such situations, have not defended the weak when they could and should have done so.<sup>5</sup>

What can be done? To ask that question in 1989, after months of slaughter in Beirut, is to be faced with very narrow choices. What is at stake in the first instance is Lebanese life: the lives of women and children who have lived in bunkers and bomb shelters; the lives of the vast majority of ordinary Lebanese who are not terrorists or members of militias, but citizens who have lived and worked in a free-fire zone. At a different level, the stakes are political and cultural; the Lebanese experiment—a multi-religious, multi-ethnic democracy—must be restored. It is important for the Lebanese, and it was a crucial ingredient in the Middle East; it is now mortally threatened. What is at stake today is whether this valuable attempt of bridging both East and West and Christianity and Islam can survive or will ever be tried again.

The significance of what is at stake in Lebanon has been continually stressed by Pope John Paul II. In his letter to the secretary general of the United Nations of May 15, 1989, he said:

At this point, the very existence of Lebanon is threatened; for

many years, this country has been an example of the peaceful coexistence of its citizens, both Christian and Muslim, based on the foundation of the equality of rights, and respect for the principles of a democratic society.<sup>6</sup>

One need not endorse, support, or agree with some things done under the title Christian during the last fifteen years, to be able to say that Christian presence in Lebanon is an anchor for Christian life in the Middle East. What is at stake in Lebanon is not only the Christian presence, but also the way that presence there has sustained Christian hope and life in other countries of the Middle East.

What can be done? If the tragedy of Lebanon involves, in part, what some outside forces have done in the country, the crime against Lebanon is the way other outside forces have failed to provide constructive diplomatic and political support in Lebanon's hour of need. The parties who did intervene in Lebanon had interests there, but little concern for the Lebanese. What is needed are outside parties who have a concern for Lebanon, but are not self-interested parties in the usual sense of the term.

In his September 26, 1989 message to episcopal conferences throughout the world, Pope John Paul II forcefully emphasized the moral imperative that today confronts the international community in its duty to Lebanon:

To be sure, it is not for the pope to put forward technical solutions; yet, out of concern for the spiritual and material well-being of every person without distinction, I feel that it is my grave duty to insist on certain obligations which are incumbent upon the leaders of nations. Disregard for these obligations could lead quite simply to a breakdown of orderly international relations and, once again, to the handing over of mankind to brute force alone. If rights, duties, and those procedures which international leaders have worked out and subscribed to are scorned with impunity, then relations between peoples will suffer, peace will be

threatened, and mankind will end up a hostage to the ambitions and interests of those who hold the most power. For this reason, I have wished to state again and again—and I repeat it once more today on behalf of the whole Church—that international law and those institutions which guarantee it remain indispensable points of reference for defending the equal dignity of peoples and of individuals.<sup>7</sup>

Intervention has hurt the Lebanese, but it is seriously questionable in 1989 whether the Lebanese are capable of moving beyond war and destruction without help. It will take a mix of internal and external forces to reconstruct Lebanon. The reforms that are required—constitutionally, politically, economically, and legally—must be the work of the Lebanese themselves. They must be shaped by a generation of Lebanese political leaders who recognize that the designs of the 1940s will not fit the Middle East of the 1990s and who can command respect and loyalty across religious lines.

Successful internal reform, however, requires a setting in which the Lebanese can discuss, decide, and choose. Hence, immediate Syrian withdrawal from Beirut and ultimate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon is a necessary condition for lasting peace and democratic progress in Lebanon. At present, the Syrians have little incentive to withdraw from all of Lebanon; a larger international framework must be created that will advocate and create the conditions for Syrian withdrawal and will promise that legitimate Syrian foreign policy concerns will be addressed.

The same logic applies to Israel; it has legitimate security concerns that must be addressed, but not at the expense of Lebanon.

Creating this larger international context is a task in which the United States is an indispensable force, together with the Arab League and France. There is also the widespread conviction that Soviet influence in Syria could be considerable. The imperative is to free Lebanon of all foreign forces and to pursue the task of reconstruction of Lebanese political and economic institutions.

The Arab League, in an effort to help end the violence in Lebanon and provide an opportunity for reform, undertook an initiative in 1989 that led to a new accord adopted in Taif and was

followed by the election of a new president of Lebanon. In a document such as this, we cannot fully assess the impact of events unfolding, even as we consider this statement. We call on all the parties in Lebanon, especially the Christians, as well as the United States government, to use recent developments, future opportunities, and any viable process to work toward the objectives we have already outlined: a lasting end to the violence; effective reform and reconciliation; and the final withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. In addition to necessary political reconstruction, significant economic assistance—both immediate humanitarian aid and longer-term development assistance—will be essential for Lebanon's recovery.

#### **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 1948, 1956, 1967, and 1973. From this history emerged the formula of "land for peace" in UN Resolution 242, 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 that 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 inter-national 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 that 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 UN Resolution 242, which treated Palestinians as refugees, the situation today—post-Rabat (1974), in light of the *intifada* (1987-1989), and after U.S.-PLO talks (1988-1989)—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 UN 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 consistent 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 tranquility that is the prerogative of every nation and condition of life and of progress for every society"<sup>8</sup>

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.<sup>9</sup>

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 their 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 tranquility. 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 that 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 that 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 UN 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 right 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:

- Their right to choose their own leadership without intervention by others
- Their right to participate as equals, through representatives
- selected by Palestinians, in all negotiations affecting their

destiny

- The right to a clear, legitimated title to their territory, not
- dependent on the authority of others

The conclusion that 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 that it is clear 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 UN Resolutions 242 and 338* 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 Arafat Statements [December 1988]), but they do not dispense with UN Resolutions 242 and 338.

The thrust of UN 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 that our episcopal conference has consistently affirmed.<sup>10</sup> The very diversity of the religious communities in the region and the differences among political regimes mean 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 that 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 intensifies conflict in the region and inflames discussion of the Middle East in the broader world community. As the Pontifical Justice and Peace Commission said in its November 1988 document, *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society*:

Amongst 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.<sup>11</sup>

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 and the rights of all and opposition to every form of prejudice that 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 principles set forth by the Holy See on several occasions:

- The sacred character of Jerusalem as a heritage for the Abrahamic faiths should be guaranteed.
- Religious freedom of persons and of communities should be safeguarded.
- The rights acquired by the various communities regarding shrines, holy places, educational and social institutions must be ensured.
- The Holy City's special religious status and the shrines proper to each religion should be protected by "an appropriate juridical safeguard" that 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 to 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 that 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 that 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 U.S. 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 forty-year war against Israel and as a threat to the security of the state."<sup>12</sup> 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 U.S. government's *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988* documents several principal categories of human rights violations, including but not limited to:

- Excessive use of force resulting in many Palestinian deaths
- Physical abuse and beatings of prisoners and of others not directly involved in demonstrations
- Demolition and sealing of homes
- Closing of educational institutions
- Arbitrary arrest, detention, and exile

Of particular concern to us as bishops is the April 1989 *Statement by the Heads of Christian Communities in Jerusalem*, describing their peoples' 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.<sup>13</sup>

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, that 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. U.S. Policy: Recommendations

We have had U.S. 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 U.S. 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 U.S. 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 that 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.<sup>14</sup>

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 political dialogue will require Arab states to assure Israeli legitimacy and security, and it will require Israeli commitment to land for peace. The Israel-Egypt negotiations of the 1970s 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 advo-

cated by different parties. The Israeli government advanced a proposal on May 14, 1989. President Mubarak of Egypt has offered recommendations that 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.

Dialogue—practical, realistic negotiations—based on a firm commitment to secure a just peace is also a key to the survival of Lebanon. The dialogue required is between Lebanese and Lebanese, about the internal structure and polity of their country. But a diplomatic dialogue of Syrians and Israelis with the Lebanese is needed as well.

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 U.S.-Soviet Relationship in the Middle East*

One of the elements that 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 U.S.-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 that should guide the superpowers is one that gives priority to the welfare of the local states and people. It should not be an

imposition of superpower views on weaker states.

### ***B. The United States and Lebanon***

The horror and tragedy of Lebanon demand more systematic attention from the United States than they have received in several years. The United States cannot "solve" the Lebanese problem, but the Lebanese cannot overcome the legacy of a fifteen-year war without outside moral, diplomatic, humanitarian, and economic assistance. The dissolution of Lebanon as a nation could move relentlessly forward; without the diplomatic and humanitarian—but not military—intervention of major outside powers, Lebanon as a sovereign state could pass tragically into history.

Some Lebanese believe the United States is sacrificing Lebanon to larger Middle East policy goals. Whatever the reason for believing this to be the case, the United States must take steps immediately to demonstrate that it is not. The United States should pursue a clear, consistent policy, pressing for the withdrawal of all foreign forces from Lebanon. The United States should also be actively involved in supporting the process of constitutional reform and reconciliation in Lebanon. Finally, the United States should lead and help coordinate an effort of international assistance designed to alleviate the scars of war and to begin a systematic process of rebuilding Lebanese society and the economy.

### ***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 U.S. government.

Human rights violations should be addressed in light of U.S. 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 U.S. 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 issues 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 U.S. role should be to obtain Palestinian clarification of the December declaration accepting Israel's existence and the terms of UN 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."<sup>15</sup>

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 that 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***

U.S. 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. U.S. 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 U.S. aid to Israel, as to other states, should have as its purpose the pursuit of peace with justice for all people.

### *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 U.S. 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 fact 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 that 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 that 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 complexities of the Middle East in order to highlight the moral principles and problems

that 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 that 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 that 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, and 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: (1) the capacity for hope in the face of difficulty and danger, and (2) the pursuit of peace in the face of conflict and violence. Let us seek to turn our hopes into true progress toward genuine and lasting peace.

## Notes

1. The Holy See, Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews, "Notes on the Correct Way to Present the Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis of the Roman Catholic Church," *Origins* 15:7 (July 4, 1985): section VI.

2. John Paul II, Angelus Address for First Sunday of Advent, *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 49 (December 5, 1988): 1.

3. John Paul II, "Address to Diplomats Corps Accredited for the Holy See," *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 7 (February 13, 1989): 2.

4. John Paul II, "Appeal to Followers of Islam," *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 40 (October 2, 1989): 2.

5. John Paul II, Angelus Address for the Assumption, *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 34 (August 21, 1989): 1.

6. John Paul II, "Letter to the United Nations General Secretary (May 15, 1989)," *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 22 (May 29, 1989): 2.

7. John Paul II, "Letter to All Bishops of the Catholic Church Concerning the Situation in Lebanon (27 September 1989)," *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 40 (October 2, 1989): 1.

8. Pius XII, *Redemptionis Anno* (1954).

9. John Paul II, *Unity in the Work of Service* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1987), 28-29.

10. National Conference of Catholic Bishops, *A Word of Solidarity, A Call for Justice: A Statement on Religious Freedom in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988).

11. Pontifical Justice Peace Commission, *The Church and Racism: Towards a More Fraternal Society* (Washington, D.C.: United States Catholic Conference, 1988), no. 15.

12. U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 1988* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1989), 1377.

13. Statement by the Heads of the Christian Communities in Jerusalem.

14. John Paul II, "To Build Peace, Respect Minorities," Message for the World Day of Peace (January 1, 1989), *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 51-52 (December 19/26, 1988): 2.

15. John Paul II, Angelus Address for First Sunday of Advent, *L'Osservatore Romano* [English edition] 49 (December 5, 1988): 1.

The president of the NCCB, Archbishop John May, appointed an ad hoc committee to review and update conference policy on the Middle East since its 1978 statement. The committee, chaired by Archbishop Roger Mahony and including Cardinal John O'Connor and Archbishop William Keeler, carried out an extensive process of consultation and dialogue with Jewish organizations, Arab groups, and other religious leaders and experts with an interest in the Middle East. Member of the committee also visited with religious and political leaders in the Middle East in May and July of 1989. After completing this extensive consultation process, the ad hoc committee developed a statement entitled *Toward Peace in the Middle East: Perspectives, Principles, and Hopes*. The statement was presented to the NCCB Administrative Committee in September 1989 and to the full body of bishops at their November 1989 meeting. The bishops adopted the statement by an unanimous vote. It is, therefore, authorized for publication by the undersigned as a statement of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Monsignor Robert N. Lynch  
General Secretary  
NCCB/USCC

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