

March 2, 2020

Dear Members of Congress:

We are writing as U.S. churches and church-related organizations, with a long commitment to working toward a peaceful and just resolution to the conflict in Israel-Palestine.

Our faith commitment calls us to ensure that those who are most vulnerable receive the assistance they need. We were heartened to see the restoration of some bilateral assistance to programs in the West Bank and Gaza for Fiscal Year 2020. We encourage Congress to ensure that these funds are disbursed promptly to vital programs such as the East Jerusalem Hospital Network. For Fiscal Year 2021, we recommend funding be restored at least to the previous level of \$225 million in Economic Support Funds (ESF) for humanitarian and development programs in the West Bank and Gaza.

Likewise, we urge Congress to provide necessary funding to support the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). UNRWA provides critical services, including emergency food assistance, health care, and education to Palestinian refugees throughout the Middle East. The importance of UNRWA's programs has become even more apparent in recent months, with the Lebanese economy collapsing, the continuing war and economic crisis in Syria, and the deepening humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. Refugee and civilian access to clean water, reliable electricity, and adequate health care continues to deteriorate. We urge Congress to fund UNRWA at a level commensurate with past years, not less than \$360 million.

For many decades, Congress regularly appropriated funds to ensure the needs of vulnerable Palestinians would be met. Humanitarian aid should never be withheld to achieve political goals. The denial of humanitarian assistance to those who are most in need is contrary to humanitarian principles and undermines the goal of shared security for all people in the region.

Again, we deeply appreciate your efforts last year in these regards and strongly urge you to support funding for UNRWA and bilateral programs in the West Bank and Gaza in Fiscal Year 2021 appropriations and to ensure that these funds are disbursed in accordance with congressional intent.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Alliance of Baptists

American Friends Service Committee

Christian Reformed Church Office of Social Justice

Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy

Church World Service

Churches for Middle East Peace

Conference of Major Superiors of Men (Catholic)

The Episcopal Church

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee U.S. Washington Office

National Council of Churches

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Unitarian Universalist Association

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries