

November 21, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

Over the course of the last several days, we have been reminded of the tremendous cost of violence and the urgency of finding a peaceful resolution to the escalating conflict between Israel and Gaza. We lament what these developments mean for all the injured, for those who mourn the death of loved ones and all who live in fear of escalating violence. We pledge to pray and work for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

We value our interfaith relationships with you, our Jewish brothers and sisters, and wish to respond affirmatively to your call for a high level meeting in order “to determine a more positive path forward for our communities.” We remain committed to the issues raised in our letter to Congress. At the same time we remain no less committed to deepening and strengthening our relationships even when we disagree. Face to face dialogue, as lifted up in your letter, can be a starting point in seeking to establish a way forward. Given the both supportive and critical responses to our letter and the concerns expressed for Jewish-Christian relationships, we intend to share this letter with others after you have received it.

We believe that it is important for us to differentiate between the signatories of the October 5 letter, and the participants in the two national Jewish-Christian roundtables. It is our hope that those two tables can resume their important work while we work to initiate the dialogue for which you have called and to which we are responding positively in this letter. Even further, we acknowledge that amongst us as signatories, there are varying degrees of relationship between the churches and organizations we represent and Jewish partners. As we have discussed the possibilities, we have come to believe that the questions of who should be convened and for what purposes are best addressed in dialogue together. As a next step, we suggest that we each name 2-3 leaders from our respective communities who could meet with one another in order to give shape to a possible meeting with the goal of promoting better understanding between us.

We are appreciative of the numerous ways in which many of our organizations and yours work together in interfaith contexts and in public policy on social issues of common concern. It is our hope that as we tend to the very real differences between us, we also seek ways to identify and build upon the common ground we share.

Sincerely,

American Baptist Churches, U.S.A.
American Friends Service Committee
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
National Council of Churches USA
Orthodox Peace Fellowship
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
The United Methodist Church
United Church of Christ