Letter to President Bush From Evangelical Leaders

July 29, 2007

President George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write as evangelical Christian leaders in the United States to thank you for your efforts (including the major address on July 16) to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations to achieve a lasting peace in the region. We affirm your clear call for a two-state solution. We urge that your administration not grow weary in the time it has left in office to utilize the vast influence of America to demonstrate creative, consistent and determined U.S. leadership to create a new future for Israelis and Palestinians. We pray to that end, Mr. President.

We also write to correct a serious misperception among some people including some U.S. policymakers that all American evangelicals are opposed to a two-state solution and creation of a new Palestinian state that includes the vast majority of the West Bank. Nothing could be further from the truth. We, who sign this letter, represent large numbers of evangelicals throughout the U.S. who support justice for both Israelis and Palestinians. We hope this support will embolden you and your administration to proceed confidently and forthrightly in negotiations with both sides in the region.

As evangelical Christians, we embrace the biblical promise to Abraham: "I will bless those who bless you." (Genesis 12:3). And precisely as evangelical Christians committed to the full teaching of the Scriptures, we know that blessing and loving people (including Jews and the present State of Israel) does not mean withholding criticism when it is warranted. Genuine love and genuine blessing means acting in ways that promote the genuine and long-term well being of our neighbors. Perhaps the best way we can bless Israel is to encourage her to remember, as she deals with her neighbor Palestinians, the profound teaching on justice that the Hebrew prophets proclaimed so forcefully as an inestimably precious gift to the whole world.

Historical honesty compels us to recognize that both Israelis and Palestinians have legitimate rights stretching back for millennia to the lands of Israel/Palestine. Both Israelis and Palestinians have committed violence and injustice against each other. The only way to bring the tragic cycle of violence to an end is for Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate a just, lasting agreement that guarantees both sides viable, independent, secure states. To achieve that goal, both sides must give up some of their competing, incompatible claims. Israelis and Palestinians must both accept each other's right to exist. And to achieve that goal, the U.S. must provide robust leadership within the Quartet to reconstitute the Middle East roadmap, whose full
implementation would guarantee the security of the State of Israel and the viability of a Palestinian State. We affirm the new role of former Prime Minister Tony Blair and pray that the conference you plan for this fall will be a success.

Mr. President, we renew our prayers and support for your leadership to help bring peace to Jerusalem, and justice and peace for all the people in the Holy Land.

Finally, we would request to meet with you to personally convey our support and discuss other ways in which we may help your administration on this crucial issue.

Sincerely,

Ronald J. Sider, President
Evangelicals for Social Action

Don Argue, President
Northwest University

Raymond J. Bakke, Chancellor
Bakke Graduate University

Gary M. Benedict, President
The Christian & Missionary Alliance

George K. Brushaber, President
Bethel University

Gary M. Burge, Professor
Wheaton College & Graduate School

Tony Campolo, President/Founder
Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education

Christopher J. Doyle, CEO
American Leprosy Mission

Leighton Ford, President
Leighton Ford Ministries

Daniel Grothe, Pastoral Staff
New Life Church (Colorado Springs)

Vernon Grounds, Chancellor
Denver Seminary
Stephen Hayner, former President
InterVarsity Christian Fellowship

Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor
Northland Church
Member, Executive Committee of the NAE

Jo Anne Lyon, Founder/CEO
World Hope International

Gordon MacDonald, Chair of the Board
World Relief

Albert G. Miller, Professor
Oberlin College

Richard Mouw, President
Fuller Theological Seminary

David Neff, Editor
Christianity Today

Glenn R. Palmberg, President
Evangelical Covenant Church

Earl Palmer, Senior Pastor
University Presbyterian Church Seattle

Victor D. Pentz, Pastor
Peachtree Presbyterian Church, Atlanta

John Perkins, President
John M. Perkins Foundation for Reconciliation & Development

Bob Roberts, Jr., Senior Pastor
Northwood Church, Dallas

Leonard Rogers, Executive Director
Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding

Andrew Ryskamp, Executive Director
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee

Chris Seiple, President
As evangelical Christians committed to the full authority of the Scriptures, we feel compelled to make a statement together at this historic moment in the life of the Holy Land.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is near a momentous turning point. The strife has continued—sometimes simmering, sometimes exploding in terrible conflict—for decades.

In the context of our ongoing support for the security of Israel, we believe that unless the situation between Israel and Palestine improves quickly, the consequences will be devastating. Palestinians—especially the youth who have no economic opportunity—are increasingly sympathetic to radical solutions and terrorism. As a result, the threat to Israel’s security is now greater.

Likewise, the threat to America’s national security is greater. Because so many of the world’s 1.3 billion Muslims see America through the prism of Israel-Palestine, the longer the current situation continues, the more likely it is that anti-American attitudes, policies, and terrorist activities
will increase dramatically among Muslims worldwide.

As evangelical Christians, we believe our faith compels us to speak a word together at this crucial moment.

The Bible clearly teaches that God longs for justice and peace for all people. We believe that the principles about justice taught so powerfully by the Hebrew prophets apply to all nations including the United States, Israel, and the Palestinians. Therefore we are compelled to work for a fair, negotiated solution for both Israelis and Palestinians. We resolve to work diligently for a secure, enduring peace and a flourishing economy for the democratic State of Israel. We also resolve to work for a viable permanent, democratic Palestinian State with a flourishing economy that offers economic opportunity to all its people. We believe that the way forward is for the Israelis and Palestinians to negotiate a fair, two-state solution.

We are encouraged that the Israeli and Palestinian governments have officially endorsed a two-state solution and that polls demonstrate that solid majorities in both Israel and Palestine embrace this path.

We call on all evangelicals, all Christians, and everyone of good will to join us to work and pray faithfully in the coming months for a just, lasting two-state solution in the Holy Land. We call on all involved governments to work diligently toward this goal. And we covenant to pray for the leaders of all the nations engaged in this effort, hoping for them the blessing of our Lord who said, “Blessed are the peacemakers.”

As we work and pray, we are strengthened by the truth that Christ will return some day to complete his victory over sin and injustice, and we are empowered by the knowledge that until He comes again, He summons us to support the things that promote peace and justice for everyone in the Holy Land.

List of Endorsers Follows

Endorsers of “An Evangelical Statement on Israel/Palestine” November 28, 2007

Thomas Armiger, General Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church
Gayle D. Beebe, President, Westmont College
David Black, President, Eastern University
Marilyn Borst, Director of Global Ministry, Peachtree Presbyterian Church
Ed Boschman, Executive Director, U.S. Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches
David C. Brown, Chair, Evangelical Child & Family Agency
George K. Brashaber, President, Bethel University
Gary M. Burge, Professor of New Testament, Wheaton College
Tony Campolo, President/Founder, Evangelical Association for the Promotion of Education
R. Judson Carlberg, President, Gordon College
Joseph Castleberry, President, Northwest University
Paul A. Cedar, Chairman, Mission America Coalition
Thomas A. Curry, Senior Minister, Round Lake Community Church
Craig C. Darling, U.S. Director, India Rural Evangelical Fellowship
Murray Dempster, President, Vanguard University
G. Blair Dowden, President, Huntington University
Robert P. Dugan, Jr., Retired, National Association of Evangelicals
Merrill Ewert, President, Fresno Pacific University
Leighton Ford, President, Leighton Ford Ministries
Arthur Evans Gay, Minister-at-Large, Evangelical Initiatives International
Jules Glanzer, President Elect, Tabor College
Vernon Grounds, Chancellor, Denver Seminary
Ronald Habegger, President, Fellowship of Evangelical Churches
Jack Haberer, Editor, The Presbyterian Outlook
Mike Hagan, President, Sioux Falls Seminary
Stephen A. Hayner, Professor, Columbia Theological Seminary
Dennis Hollinger, President, Evangelical Theological Seminary
Jim Holm, President, Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary
John Hubers, Former Director of Reformed Church Mission Program, Middle East and South Asia
Reformed Church in America
John A. Huffman, Jr., Pastor, St. Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Newport Beach
Board Chair, Christianity Today International
Ken Hunn, Executive Director, The Brethren Church
Joel Hunter, Senior Pastor, Northland Church
John K. Jenkins, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Glenarden
Bruce W. Jones, National Association of Evangelicals
J. Ellsworth Kalas, President, Asbury Theological Seminary
John F. Kim, Interim President, Northern Seminary
Peter Kuzmic, President, Evangelical Theological Seminary (Osijek, Croatia)
Duane Litfin, President, Wheaton College
Jo Anne Lyon, CEO, World Hope International
V. James Mannoia, President, Greensville College
Molly T. Marshall, President, Central Baptist Theological Seminary
Kevin T. McBride, Senior Pastor, Raymond Baptist Church
Larry J. McKinney, President, Simpson University
Gregory A. Monaco, Associate Field Director, Youth for Christ/USA
Royce L. Money, President, Abilene Christian University
Richard Mouw, President, Fuller Theological Seminary
Shirley A. Mullen, President, Houghton College
Mike O’Neal, President, Oklahoma Christian University
David Neff, Editor-in-Chief, Christianity Today
Glenn R. Palmberg, President, Evangelical Covenant Church
Earl F. Palmer, Minister, University Presbyterian Church
Linda Pampeyan, Consultant, Leadership Renewal Center
Ted W. Pampeyan, Director, Leadership Renewal Center
David L. Parkyn, President, North Park University
Roger Parrot, President, Belhaven College
Jerry Pence, General Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church
Rita Rihani, Professor of Arabic, North Park University
Bob Roberts, Pastor, Northwood Church
Bill Robinson, President, Whitworth University
Haddon W. Robinson, President, Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary
Leonard Rodgers, Executive Director, Evangelicals for Middle East Understanding
Andrew Ryskamp, Director, Christian Reformed World Relief Committee
Michael G. Scales, President, Nyack College/ATS
Chris Seiple, President, Institute for Global Engagement
Robert Seiple, Former Ambassador-at-Large, for International Religious Freedom
Ronald J. Sider, President, Evangelicals for Social Action
James Skillen, President, Center for Public Justice
Wallace Smith, President, Palmer Theological Seminary
Glen H. Stassen, Lewis Smedes Professor of Christian Ethics, Fuller Theological Seminary
Gary W. Streit, President, Malone College
Joseph Tkach, President, Worldwide Church of God
Paul Vicalvi, Chaplains Commission Executive Director, National Association of Evangelicals
Harold Vogelaar, Professor Emeritus, Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago
Berten Waggoner, National Director, Vineyard USA
Don Wagner, Professor, North Park University
John Wagner, Pastor, Andover Congregational Church
Jon R. Wallace, President, Azusa Pacific University
Bob Wenz, Renewing Total Worship Ministries
Luder G. Whitlock, Executive Director, The Trinity Forum
John P. Williams, Jr., Regional Director, Evangelical Friends International - North America
Craig Williford, President, Denver Seminary
Earl L. Wilson, General Superintendent, The Wesleyan Church
Larry E. Yonker, Vice-President, The Elevation Group