

## 2009/08/04 Chicago Faith Coalition Update #1

### Informing and Advocating on Israeli/Palestinian Issues

You are receiving this 2009/08/04 Chicago Faith Coalition Update #1 email because you have endorsed a Chicago Faith Coalition on Middle East Policy (CFCMEP) letter, attended (or were invited to) a CFCMEP meeting or have requested being added to this distribution list. The new Chicago Faith Coalition website home page [view [here](#)] will also feature and archive these updates. Every two weeks, the Chicago Faith Coalition website will also post a new poll about Israeli/Palestinian matters. The Chicago Faith Coalition will be the sole user of your email. You can unsubscribe at any time. Please email [Ed Thompson](#) with suggested items for inclusion in these weekly updates or with comments about the update.

#### Action Alert

Email campaigns targeted to Senators have been initiated by **Churches for Middle East Peace** [here](#) and **J Street** [here](#). The CMEP campaign ends August 5. Senators are being encouraged to NOT sign the Bayh-Risch letter to President Obama. This letter urges Arab states to make "dramatic gestures toward Israel" but does not mention any obligation by Israel to stop the expansion of settlements in Palestinian territories or for Palestinians to end incitement to violence against Israel.

Every U.S. Senator received a letter from **Americans for Peace Now** asking them to demand the Bayh-Risch letter be amended or that they refuse to sign it. Details of the APN letter can be reviewed [here](#).

The House of Representatives began its recess on July 31. The Senate will begin its recess on August 8 and return on September 8. Meet with your Senators and your Representative during this time to speak out for justice, security, peace and reconciliation in Israel/Palestine. Find contact information for your elected representative [here](#).

## U.S. Foreign Policy

Several senior U.S. officials visited Israeli leaders this past week. Intensity is building as hard-line, right-wing Israeli advocacy organizations flood the media with messages about the Iranian nuclear threat in order to divert attention from Israel's failure to freeze settlement construction. Those of us who seek justice, security, peace and reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians believe that Israel must be held accountable for their failure to stop settlement expansion—a violation of stated U.S. policy for nearly four decades.

The relationships of the United States with Muslim and Arab countries have been strained for decades because we have failed to hold Israel accountable or to create any consequences to Israel for ignoring our stated policy about settlements. Those of us who support the Obama administration getting "tough on Israel" believe strongly that it is in the best interests of Israel to freeze settlements. Israeli apologists who write to discredit Obama make their case in the following two articles. These apologists do not address the many violations of Palestinian human rights and property rights that are created by settlements.

Elliott Abrams was given the front page of the *Wall Street Journal* Weekend section [view [here](#)] to lament the Obama policies that have resulted in a June poll in which only 6% of the Israelis view Obama as "pro-Israel" when 88% of the Israelis viewed President Bush as "pro-Israel."

The *Washington Post* published an editorial that stated: "Mr. Obama chose to insist on an absolutist demand for a settlement 'freeze.'" The editorial closed with the sentence "If he is to be effective in brokering a peace deal, Mr. Obama will need to show both sides that they can trust him - and he must be tough on more than one country." Read the editorial [here](#).

*The Economist* provides a fresh perspective in articles entitled "Not quite as gloomy as they look" [view [here](#)] and "Acceptance versus recognition" [view [here](#)]. The first article concludes with "Large majorities of Israelis and Palestinians now want two states, side by side. It is still possible that one day they will get their way." The second article concludes with "If Hamas wanted to show good will as part of its campaign to enter negotiations, the junking-or drastic editing-of its blood-curdling charter would be a telling token of intent."

Must read or must view or must hear

View this video [here](#) to see an innovative message distribution system in Israel sponsored by **Peace Now**. Listen [here](#) to this 30-minute audio recording of Dori Smith's interview with Dr. Alice Rothchild on Talk Nation Radio for July 30, 2009. As a Jewish physician, she brings a unique perspective on a wide range of issues that are critical for justice, security, peace and reconciliation in Israel/Palestine.

Palestinian protests that are rarely reported in U.S. news media

Bil'in is a small village sixteen km west of Ramallah in the Palestinian West Bank. In April 2004 Israel began constructing the separation barrier that confiscated 575 acres of land owned by residents of Bil'in. Access to land owned by the villagers (located on the other side of the wall) is now at the discretion of the Israeli Defense Forces. About five years ago, local villagers, led by Iyad Burnat, started nonviolent protests after Friday prayers about these property rights violations. For several years, international citizens from around the world have joined these Friday nonviolent protests.

Since June 29, night raids on the village have occurred with regularity and 29 people in the village have been arrested and imprisoned by the Israeli Defense Forces. Click [here](#) to watch a five minute and thirty-six second video of the Israeli raid that occurred from 3:00 AM to 6:45 AM on August 3, 2009.

More details about Bil'in can be found at [here](#) and on Pages 30 and 31 in a new publication entitled Steadfast Hope: The Palestinian Quest for Just Peace. The Israel/Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) describes their new publication [here](#).

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