

Statement on United States veto of resolution on Israeli settlements

Presiding Bishop Mark S. Hanson

February 18, 2011

I am dismayed that the United States exercised its veto power today in the United Nations Security Council when a resolution on Israeli settlements and related matters was called to a vote.

As I and several other Christian leaders pointed out earlier this month in a letter to President Barack Obama, the resolution used language regarding the settlements employed by the United States in the past and referred to undertakings on settlement construction agreed to in the past by Israel, the Palestinian Authority and the United States.

Israeli settlements continue to expand in the West Bank despite the objections of the United States and the international community, posing, as the Obama administration has stated repeatedly, an obstacle to peace. The U.N. Security Council resolution would have powerfully underscored the international position on Israeli settlements.

The resolution also provided an opportunity to demonstrate the resolve of the international community that the parties reach a final status agreement as soon as feasible.

I now am concerned that this action will increase a despondent mood about the future of such talks and will possibly strengthen extremist voices in the region who call for a less peaceful resolution of these issues.

In the wake of this action, I call upon the international community, including the United States, to work diligently toward commencing negotiations with the aim of reaching a final status agreement.

The Rev. Mark S. Hanson
Presiding Bishop
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America