

## **Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East Congratulates the Palestinian People Upon Official Vatican Recognition of the State of Palestine**

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NEW YORK — Christians for Fair Witness on the Middle East (“Fair Witness”) congratulates the Palestinian people upon news that the Vatican has officially recognized the state of Palestine in a new treaty. The treaty clarifies that the Holy See has switched its diplomatic relations from the Palestine Liberation Organization to the state of Palestine. Fair Witness is glad to see the Vatican use its moral authority to acknowledge that Palestinians, like any other people, are entitled to self-determination and statehood.

“The conflict between Palestinians and Israelis however, can only be solved by direct negotiations,” reminds Rev. James Loughran, S.A., Director of the Graymoor Ecumenical & Interreligious Institute and Fair Witness Executive Committee Member. “Recognition of Palestinian Statehood by the Holy See is a serious and welcomed step forward but there will be no end to this conflict until Israelis and Palestinians come together and negotiate a final status agreement. Continuing disputes over borders, refugees, Jerusalem and security arrangements can not be solved by the international community — the parties themselves must do this.”

Therefore, Fair Witness issues the following plea: “for the sake of peace, both parties must stop posturing and begin negotiating. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu must do what his predecessors Ehud Barak and Ehud Olmert did in 2000 and 2008, respectively, and agree to vacate those settlements that would interfere with Palestinian territorial contiguity. Likewise President Abbas must, on behalf of the Palestinian people he represents, agree to give up the demand for a ‘Right of Return’ which is not compatible with a two-state solution. Peace is possible — but only through compromise on both sides.”

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