



**Mennonite  
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Committee  
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June 3, 2010

President Barack Obama  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) U.S. to express our strong concern over recent events off the coast of the Gaza Strip, and over the impact of the ongoing blockade on the people of Gaza.

MCC is a worldwide ministry of Anabaptist churches, sharing God's love and compassion for all in the name of Christ by responding to basic human needs and working for peace and justice. We have been working for peace in Palestine/Israel for more than 60 years, and we strongly condemn all violent actions, whether they involve taking a flotilla of ships by force, or firing rockets into Israel.

Our work in Gaza means that we are keenly aware of the significant impact that the blockade has had on the people of Gaza over the past three years. In short, the decision of Israel, the United States, and other governments to isolate Hamas has proven ineffective, and has amounted to the collective punishment of the people of Gaza. It is clear that governing authorities on all sides are failing in their duty to protect the interests of vulnerable people.

We urge you to call for an impartial and independent investigation into what happened on the morning of May 31, and for the immediate delivery of the humanitarian aid that was seized. Furthermore, we urge you to respond constructively to recent events by working with the international community to end the blockade of Gaza.

In recent weeks, Israel had already permitted increased—although still extremely limited—movement of goods and people across secure land borders, including materials for reconstruction projects carried out by the United Nations. The U.S. Government should continue to welcome steps such as this and strongly encourage their expansion.

I thank you for your attention to this letter, and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Rolando L. Santiago, Ph.D.  
Executive Director  
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.