



The Holy See

**LETTER OF HIS HOLINESS
POPE JOHN PAUL II
TO Mr. YASSER ARAFAT
PRESIDENT OF THE PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY***

To Mr Yasser Arafat

President of the Palestinian Authority The present state of the Middle-East Peace Process and in particular the *de facto* interruption of dialogue between the Palestinian Representatives and the Israeli Government induce me to write to you and, simultaneously, to Mr. Benjamin Netanyahu, Prime Minister of Israel. I write to you, Mr President, mindful of the mutual esteem and openness which have always marked our many meetings. I am also moved by my constant concern for the well-being of the Palestinian people. In recent months I have truly hoped, and every day I have prayed, that peace in the Holy Land would continue to be the foremost objective of an open and constructive dialogue between the parties and the goal of a lasting and reasoned commitment on the part of the International Community. I know that efforts and attempts have not been lacking, but unfortunately it appears that so far they have been in vain. My fear is that if this situation continues it will become increasingly difficult to revive the quest for the trust that is essential to every negotiation. I am deeply worried, and I share the pain of those, especially Palestinians and Israelis, who feel let down and frustrated, and yet do not give in to the terrible temptation to rekindle the conflict and carry it to greater levels of hatred and violence. You know, Mr President, that in sharing my deep concern with you and the Prime Minister of Israel I am moved solely by reasons of the moral order and in the certainty of being understood and, I dare hope, listened to in the name of humanity and of the Faith in God the Creator which we have in common. In the name of God I appeal to the Palestinian and Israeli leaders to consider above all the good of their peoples and the future of the younger generations. Those generations must not continue to experience the already excessive suffering which has affected these two Peoples. They must be able to look ahead with confidence, in the hope of a better future in which provocation, tension and violence will give way to a co-existence that is productive for all. The painful history of the past must not prove vain and useless, and this will be possible only through the foresight of today's leaders, which will enable them to restore, at whatever cost, the necessary trust and willingness to compromise. I am not unaware of the practical and technical difficulties involved, and which will arise at every step of the way, but I believe that they can and must be met with courage and determination, virtues proper to those who work for peace in a land that is Holy for the peoples who live there and for the whole of humanity. Millions of believers, Jews, Christians and Moslems from all over the world look to that land. Many of them wish to go there on pilgrimage. Also and especially for this reason there should be peace, so that

the meaning of the approaching Great Jubilee of the Year 2000 may be complete. I greet you warmly, Mr President, and I re-affirm my closeness to you and to the Palestinian People, assuring you that the Holy See will always be ready to welcome the Palestinian and Israeli Representatives seeking to build peace in goodwill and trust. The Holy See will have the same openness to all who sincerely wish to offer their necessary contribution. May Almighty God bless those who sow peace and seek the good of all peoples. *From the Vatican, 16 June 1997*

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