

Bush urged to work on Mideast conflict: Leaders request presidential envoy

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Representing 28 U.S. religious organizations, a diverse group of leaders has appealed to President Bush to make every effort in his second term to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The National Interreligious Leadership Initiative for Peace in the Middle East—made up of Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders—requested that the administration appoint a special presidential envoy to the region and negotiate a timeline for steps to be taken by the Israeli government and the Palestinian Authority.

In a news conference at the National Press Club last month, the leaders also called for increased international economic aid to improve security and promote development for the Palestinian people.

Clifton Kirkpatrick, stated clerk of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), said the Bush administration should ramp up its involvement in the Middle East, from making visits to sending a presidential envoy. “That kind of high-level presence is exactly what we need,” he said. The leaders also want to meet with the president.

The appeal included leaders from a cross-section of religious life, including the U.S. Conference in Catholic Bishops, World Vision, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Reform Judaism, the United Synagogue of Conservative Judaism and the Islamic Society of North America. *—Religion News Service*