



**American Friends
Service Committee**

MEDIA RELEASE

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Faith Leaders Respond to Trump's Iran Speech

(January 8, 2020) Faith leaders responded on Wednesday to President Trump's speech on Iran, which was given after strikes on U.S. bases in Iraq continued the cycle of violence between the United States and Iran.

"We are heartened by President Trump's seeming turn away from further military action and claim that he supports Iran's 'prosperity and harmony.' But his gross mischaracterization of the Iran Nuclear Deal and announcement of further sanctions are in direct opposition to his stated desire for reconciliation. De-escalation will require constructive engagement and a shift from the demonization of Iran," said **Aura Kanegis of the American Friends Service Committee**

"The Presbyterian Church (USA) supports the moves toward de-escalation evident in the President's speech this morning. Our church lifts up the value of reduced tensions and open dialogue with Iran and its 82 million people. We lament the moves away from the Iran Nuclear Deal as it offered a pathway for further positive change and trust in the region and the world. As members of a community of nations, we must work to reduce tension and avoid conflict, rather than continuing down the path to yet another war in the Middle East. War with Iran is not the answer. Diplomacy and international cooperation are the only paths to lasting security," said **Rev. Jimmie Hawkins, Director of the Office of Public Witness, Presbyterian Church (USA)**

"While we welcome that the Trump Administration is exercising restraint in terms of further military action against Iran, we would still challenge the president's misinformation and dismissal of the Iran nuclear deal. That multilateral effort had the greatest potential not only to stop any attempt by Iran to develop nuclear weapons, but also could have reshaped and strengthened diplomacy across the Middle East." -**Johnny Zokovitch, Executive Director, Pax Christi USA**

"In his press briefing today, the President offered a window of hope for de-escalation of the U.S. conflict with Iran. "The United States is ready to embrace peace with all who seek it." Likewise, last night, following the news of the attack on U.S. bases, Iran's foreign minister offered a similar hope in a tweet indicating that Iran does, "not seek escalation or war." The window for peace to take root is now. Further sanctions, threats, or sabre rattling will only escalate a conflict that neither country wants. A return to diplomacy is needed. We pray that our President and leaders in Iran have the courage to

choose peace today and in the days to come.” -**Rev. Michael Neuroth, Policy Advocate for International Issues, United Church of Christ**

“Though President Trump's speech indicates no immediate military action against Iran, his words this morning greatly impair the cause of peace. Additional sanctions and military posturing will foremost hurt innocent people and will weaken the path of dialogue and diplomacy. This moment demands that Catholics, from the grassroots to our bishops, and all people of faith speak and act for a just resolution to a conflict irresponsibly and unnecessarily provoked by the Trump administration,” said **Robert Shine, National Council Chair of Pax Christi USA**

“As Catholics committed to just peace, we affirm President Trump’s pursuit of diplomacy and de-escalation with Iran. However, we are deeply concerned by the president’s mischaracterization of the Iran nuclear agreement and his recommitment to sanctions targeting civilians. Maryknoll missionaries around the world have witnessed the devastating violence that both military action and economic sanctions can inflict upon the poorest and most vulnerable members of society, and we urge a nonviolent and multilateral approach to seeking a negotiated peace.” -**Susan Gunn, Director, Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns**

“We give thanks that for the moment, war has been avoided. In the words of Pope Francis, “War always marks the failure of peace, it is always a defeat for humanity.” We must find a way to de-escalate the conflict between the United States and Iran, to renew negotiations for a nuclear treaty, and not punish the people of Iran with harmful sanctions. Neither the American people nor the Iranian people want war. We must make that clear to our respective governments. Interfaith dialogue and action for peace in the Middle East region is now more urgent than ever.” -**Scott Wright, Director, Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach**

“Whether it is our nuclear weapons, the death penalty, killing, or war, research shows that these strategies do not ultimately function to ‘deter’ but overwhelmingly yield cycles of spiritual, emotional, physical, relational, structural, and cultural violence. That is who we become when we react to conflict with assassinations and missiles. It is a path of mutual destruction. Instead, we can challenge the injustice and violence without succumbing to the same logic. We can model the strength to not stoop to tit-for-tat violence; to take independent initiatives to build trust; to acknowledge our responsibility for harm; and to invest in, train, and support nonviolent resistance movements to the injustice we see in the conflict. So, yes peace through strength; but not through military strength. As Pope Francis said, ‘Peacemaking calls for courage, much more so than warfare...Violence is not the cure for our broken world.’” -**Eli McCarthy, Conference of Major Superiors of Men**

“At this precipice of war that has come about seemingly so rapidly, we find comfort in scripture. The Psalmist recognized that ‘the nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter’ but also the promise that ‘God is in the midst of the city... He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear; he burns the shields with fire.’ *We put our trust in God as we seek an alternative through persistent prayer and diligent efforts. We reject a logic of war, violence, and revenge. We urge our leaders and those of the Middle East and around the world to exhibit restraint and to be attentive to consequences. We counsel peace, patience, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—fruits of the Spirit. And we persevere in our efforts to work for peace with justice.*” -**Rev. Teresa Hord Owens, General Minister and President, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in the United States and Canada**