



November 19, 2007

The Honorable Dr. Condoleezza Rice
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Secretary Rice:

We write to you in the name of the Leadership Conference of Women Religious to express our deep concern about current situations in Iran that could lead to military action on the part of our nation. We call on you and on President Bush to continue to engage in dialogue around Iran's buildup of nuclear power and support of terrorist organizations in Iraq and the Middle East. We ask that you refrain from military action in resolving the critical issues.

On September 26, 2007 LCWR participated in a meeting with President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad at the Church Center at the United Nations. The meeting was convened by the Mennonites and the Catholic participation was facilitated by Pax Christi USA. The tone of this meeting, unlike earlier public appearances of the Iranian President, was respectful and dialogic. Nevertheless, questioners at the meeting pressed President Ahmadinejad, particularly on the issues of the Holocaust and the increased ability for Iran to create nuclear weapons.

Several of the Catholic participants of the meeting were able to debrief later that day. All agreed that:

1. There seems to be a steady effort on the part of President Bush to make a case for a United States attack on the nation of Iran.
2. The continued tone of threat, demonization, punishment by sanctions, and unilateral aggression does not in any way encourage peaceful resolution of the United States' differences with Iran.
3. This is a critical moment when all voices opposed to yet another war need to be raised. This is not only a political issue but a moral and an ethical one.

LCWR was also represented at a meeting of a number of Catholic organizations with the Papal Nuncio, Archbishop Pietro Sambi on August 20, 2007 to dialog about the Catholic response to the ongoing war with Iraq. From his vast experience in the Middle East, Archbishop Sambi observed that conversations and negotiations with Iraq must include Syria and Iran. The recent language of threat by the administration of the United States carries a far different message which closes the door to any dialog.

From a moral perspective, in the absence of an immediate threat against the United States or our allies, military action would constitute an act of preventive war. The Catholic Church teaches that: "[E]ngaging in a preventive war without clear proof that an attack is imminent cannot fail to raise serious moral and juridical questions." (*Compendium of the Social Doctrine*



of the Church, no.501) The use of force must always be a last resort. In addition, the failure to be transparent about one's nuclear energy program is not grounds for military intervention, nor is the possession of nuclear weapons or the issuing of statements threatening war.

The Leadership Conference of Women Religious represents approximately 1500 leaders of congregations of Catholic sisters in the United States. Members of the religious congregations we represent serve throughout the world. This international presence has led us to see how the ongoing war with Iraq has severely damaged US credibility and drained human and economic resources to an unprecedented degree both at home and abroad.

The consistent choice of military options over diplomacy and the immeasurable harm done to the civilian populations of other countries can no longer be tolerated. The members of LCWR are deeply committed to advocating for a just and peaceful resolution to all international conflicts. We ask you as Secretary of State to employ every diplomatic means, including direct talks with the government of Iran, to settle the current situations of conflict.

Please be assured of our prayer for your continued commitment to international peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Whited, CPPS". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mary Whited, CPPS
LCWR President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Dacey, SSJ". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Mary Dacey, SSJ
LCWR Past President

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "J. Lora Dambroski, OSF". The signature is written in a cursive style.

J. Lora Dambroski, OSF
LCWR President-Elect

Cc:

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
The Honorable Steny Hoyer, Majority Leader of the House
The Honorable John Boehner, Minority Leader of the House
The Honorable Harry Reid, Majority Leader of the Senate
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader of the Senate