

December 20, 2017

Vice President Mike Pence  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Vice President:

We write to you during this holy season as we celebrate the birth of Christ and remember the hope, joy, and peace that this birth brings to our broken world. We also write as leaders of Christian organizations that are striving to respond to Christ's call to serve the neediest especially those who are facing war, hunger, and oppression. We believe that robust U.S. assistance to these communities is a critical part of responding to the calling of our faith. As the Office of Management and the Budget prepares the international affairs budget for fiscal year 2019, we urge you to fully fund diplomatic, humanitarian, and peacebuilding assistance to the most vulnerable.

As 2017 comes to a close, the world remains in crisis. Violence is uprooting families and forcing displacement on a global scale. New violence has erupted in fragile countries like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burma, Mali, Afghanistan and the Central African Republic. Gang violence threatens lives throughout Central America. Despite military gains over terrorist groups such as the Islamic State, humanitarian crises in Iraq and Syria threaten to linger for years to come.

Armed conflicts in Somalia, South Sudan, Yemen, and Northeast Nigeria have fueled famines on a scale not seen in years. More families will spend this Christmas in refugee camps and informal settlements than at any time in recent history. From Bangui to Baghdad, hundreds of thousands will greet the New Year grieving the loss of their loved ones and fearing the future.

We are grateful to President Trump's remarks at this year's UN General Assembly when he stated that "the United States continues to lead the world in humanitarian assistance, including famine prevention and relief in South Sudan, Somalia, and northern Nigeria and Yemen." We agree with the President that the U.S. is a global leader in providing assistance to the most needy and we stand ready to support the Trump Administration's efforts to continue America's global leadership role.

The American people are generous, and they are problem-solvers. Even as we aid the millions who are suffering we need our government's help to address the root causes of violence. We need American diplomacy to work with allies and regional partners to help end crises in places like the Central African Republic, Burundi, and Burma.

We also need American development assistance to support local religious, women's and civil society groups working on-the-ground to end war and oppression. Without adequate resources to manage and mitigate conflict, support human rights and democracy, and respond rapidly to complex crises, the number of those exposed to death, hunger and fear will continue to grow, exacerbating human suffering and leaving a vacuum for extremists to fill, making America less secure.

America's greatness lies in our faith, hope and support of the most downtrodden of our brothers and sisters. Every year, we raise millions of dollars to help the neediest around the world and our Churches inspire tens of thousands of Americans to serve in non-profit humanitarian, peacebuilding, and poverty alleviation organizations. But we also need our government's continued moral, political, and financial support to complement our efforts.

As you ensure the judicious and responsible stewardship of taxpayer resources, we ask that you not forget the neediest this Christmas, and ensure that the American government has the resources and commitment to end the violence that drives the suffering of so many of our brothers and sisters around the globe and help them rebuild their lives. We urge you to fully fund without further cutting the international affairs budget for fiscal year 2019.

Together we stand ready to work with you, President Trump, and the rest of the Administration to foster peace on Earth this Christmas and beyond.

cc: Mick Mulvaney, Director, Office of Management and Budget  
cc: John F. Kelly, White House Chief of Staff  
cc: H.R. McMaster, United States National Security Advisor

With gratitude,

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President and Founder  
21st Century Wilberforce Initiative

Abbot Gregory J. Polan, OSB  
Abbot Primate of the International Benedictine Confederation

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Chairman  
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