

**SAMED's letter to President Barack Obama,
published as a letter to the editor in
Syracuse Post-Standard, June 25, 2009***

President Barack Obama:

We write as members of the Syracuse Area Middle East Dialogue group, which consists of local residents with equal Jewish and Palestinian (Arab) representation, along with concerned others from neither community. For more than 25 years, SAMED members have maintained a common understanding that the peaceful resolution to the intractable Israeli-Palestinian conflict is crucial to the advancement of peace and progress in the Middle East, and to America's vital interests and national security.

We wish to commend you for the comprehensive approach you are taking to advance peace between Israelis and Palestinians. We agree, as we have long believed, that sustained peace between the two peoples rests on having two states, side-by-side.

We agree with you that continued Israeli settlement expansion in the West Bank is a real obstacle to peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians. As you said, settlements "have to be stopped." We also believe that Israel needs to allow for Palestinian freedom of movement in the West Bank and to open the Gaza border crossings for humanitarian supplies and reconstruction materials.

The Palestinians also have responsibilities of their own, including continuing to enhance security and to help bring an end to terror and incitement against Israel and to maintain a ceasefire in Gaza.

We also support the idea that building peace between Israelis and Palestinians is most likely to occur in conjunction with peaceful accommodations with the other countries in the region. Such linkage can help provide the needed common security and economic development that will bring about and sustain peace between Israeli Jews and Arab Palestinians.

We deeply appreciate your leadership in all these regards. Thank you.