

FOR ISRAEL
FOR PALESTINE
FOR PEACE

LABOUR
FRIENDS
of ISRAEL

*Working towards a
two state solution*

Executive Summary

Key Points:

- LFI's campaign 'For Israel, For Palestine, For Peace' aims to support the creation of an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.
- Its aim is to help underpin any future peace process by promoting contact, cooperation, dialogue, shared community building, peaceful coexistence, joint economic development, and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians.
- The fund would provide much-needed funding to the many NGOs and projects which engage and empower Israelis and Palestinians to support peaceful coexistence.
- The British government currently supports a number of coexistence projects – but only a small percentage of UK spending in Israel-Palestine goes to support this vital work.

What we're calling for:

LFI's campaign urges the UK government to:

- Support the international effort to establish an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.
- As an interim measure, to substantially increase spending on coexistence projects – raising it from less than £150,000 to £1.35m.

Coexistence Work Nurturing Peace

Why Coexistence Projects Matter

As Britain found in Northern Ireland, broad popular support is an essential underpinning for any successful peace process. Over the two decades since the signing of the Oslo Accords, an extensive and growing network of NGOs has worked at a grassroots level to foster the values of coexistence, peace and reconciliation which will be required if any future settlement is to be sustainable.

Peace cannot simply be the work of politicians sitting at a negotiating table, it has to be built among ordinary Israelis and Palestinians.

Such people-to-people work is already evident in all kinds of fields. From sports clubs for children and young people to environmental, cultural, economic and interfaith projects, the job of building positive relationships across conflict lines has already commenced.

But, despite the huge investments made by the international community in the peace process, coexistence work has not been viewed as an essential part of this investment.

Britain's spending in Israel-Palestine exemplifies the problem. Coexistence projects are funded through the Conflict, Security and Stability Fund, a joint MoD, FCO, and DfID fund. According to calculations by LFI based on answers provided by ministers, less than 13 percent of its £1.14m spend in Israel-Palestine is on people-to-people projects.

Without sufficient funding – either from governments or private philanthropy – coexistence projects are currently only able to have a limited impact. Operating at scale and properly funded, they could, however, help to build powerful constituencies for peace in Israel and Palestine, forcing leaders in both countries to return to meaningful negotiations.

Case Study: The Parents Circle Families Forum

The Parents Circle Families Forum is an organisation of more than 600 bereaved Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost an immediate family member in the conflict. Based in Ramat-Efal, Israel, they run projects across Israel and the Palestinian Territories and have an office in Beit Jallah, Palestine. The organisation works to solve the conflict between Palestinians and Israelis through dialogue and mutual understanding. To achieve this, the PCFF runs a wide-ranging programme that includes: youth and adult education, people-to-people programmes, women's programmes, media programmes, exhibitions and documentaries. Dialogue meetings are the Parent Circle Families Forum most important ongoing daily work on the ground, taking individuals from both sides of the conflict who've lost family members into schools. They reach more than 25,000 students annually.

An International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

What is the International Fund and why do we need it?

The International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace has been designed by the Alliance for Middle East Peace – a coalition of over 90 organisations building people-to-people cooperation and coexistence – to leverage and increase public and private contributions worldwide, funding joint economic development and civil society projects that promote coexistence, peace and reconciliation. It is inspired by the successful International Fund for Ireland (INI) which spent £714m over 30 years supporting grassroots coexistence work in Northern Ireland. In all, more than 5,800 projects have been supported since INI was established to “promote economic and social advance and to encourage contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland”.

The International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace would be an independent organisation, bringing together public and private donors – nations, organisations such as corporations and private foundations, and individuals – and would focus on supporting joint initiatives and cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews in such areas as: business and joint economic development; civic activism and empowerment; community building; culture and the arts; education; environmental studies and protection; interfaith cooperation and understanding; media; reconciliation and dialogue; science; sports and recreation; and youth activities.

It is envisaged that the \$200m per-year-fund would receive contributions of approximately 25 percent each from the US; Europe; the rest of the international community (including the Arab world); and the private sector. Crucially, the intent behind the fund is to bring additional resources to solving this conflict by highlighting a critical need to support civil society projects and by unlocking large-scale project opportunities not possible with current resources. The fund is not intended to receive support that otherwise would be provided directly to either the Palestinian Authority or to Israel.

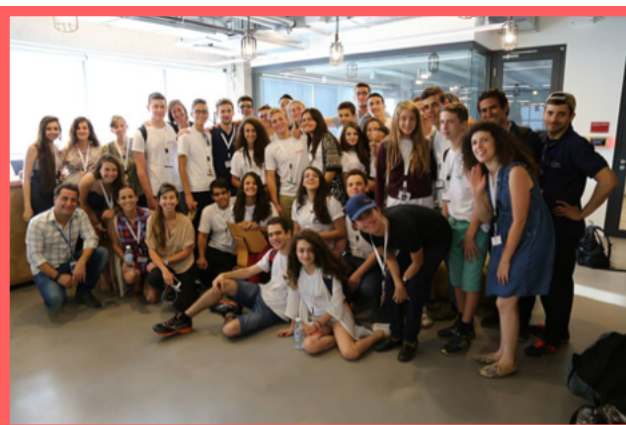


Coexistence Work Works

Case Study: MEET - Middle East Entrepreneurs of Tomorrow

Described by President Obama as “an example of how innovation can reshape the region”, MEET provides a three-year technology programme developed and supported by MIT that brings together Israeli and Palestinian young leaders through the common language of computer science and entrepreneurship. It is based in Jerusalem and managed by Israeli and Palestinian Co-CEOs and a binational staff. They aim to break the long-held misconceptions Israelis and Palestinians have of each other in order to foster cooperation and understanding among the youth that will likely provide the future leaders of the region. MEET’s goal is to find transformative solutions to the social, economic and political problems facing both sides. They believe that building up Palestinian infrastructure and promoting economic growth is the only way to ensure that the future Palestinian state will be an effective partner for peace. MEET’s programmes are composed of 50 percent girls, 50 percent boys; 50 percent Palestinians, 50 percent Israelis. MEET is a registered not-for-profit organisation with innovation hubs in Jerusalem and Nazareth.

As well as the student programme, MEET encompasses an alumni programme to mobilise a sustainable network of change makers. It has led to the creation of mentor-mentee relationships between Israelis, Palestinians and internationals through the MEET Mentoring Programme and workshops.



Coexistence Work Works

The Benefits of Coexistence Work

After two decades, there is now a significant body of evidence, based on academic and governmental evaluations, indicating the impact that coexistence projects can have. That impact, moreover, has been achieved in the face of considerable challenges, most notably the collapse of the peace process and the Second Intifada.

According to USAID, those participating in people-to-people programmes report higher levels of trust, higher levels of cooperation, more “conflict resolution values”, and less aggression and loneliness. A recent evaluation of programmes funded by the US government reported that despite the “daunting environment”, grantees have “nonetheless persevered and achieved notable successes, responding effectively to contextual challenges, achieving consistently positive results with direct participants and local communities, and establishing promising foundations for broader social-structural impact over time”.

Examining four such programmes, Ned Lazarus, a postdoctoral fellow at the School for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at Virginia’s George Mason University, concluded: “In today’s world, there are multiple conflicts in which macro-level resolution remains an uncertain prospect, and reconciliation a long-term aspiration. The initiatives profiled here testify to the meaningful work that determined peacebuilders can do, even in ostensibly intractable conditions.”

Results from individual projects underline this impact. MEET, for instance, found a 60 percent increase in the number of students who value working with someone from the “other side” after just one year on the programme. The youth-focused NGO Kids Creating Peace reported that prior to taking part in one of its projects only five percent of participants had ever met a peer from the “other side”. The project seemed to engender a shift in outlook: before joining the project, 60 percent of Israeli participants were indifferent toward the position of Palestinians and the idea of peace; afterwards, over 95 percent of Israeli participants were committed to peace and keen to engage their communities to that effect.

Similarly, the Parents Circle Friends Forum found that 70 percent of all participants had increased trust and empathy and 84 percent were motivated to participate in peacebuilding activities in their communities. One such participant commented: “This was a fascinating encounter. I never had a dialogue or met a Palestinian in the past. It was an eye-opening experience which gave me a different perspective. I discovered things which I never believed happen on the other side and also their willingness to reconcile. This gave me so much hope and caused me to look at things differently.”

International Efforts Thus Far

Congressman Joe Crowley (D-NY) and Jeff Fortenberry (R-NE) have introduced HR 1489 that authorises the appropriation of \$50 million to the creation of the International Fund in the US House of Representatives. A Senate companion bill is planned in the new Congress.

Dr. David Pollok of the Washington Institute for Near East Policy gave Congressional Testimony in front of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs on July 7 2016 stating:

“Despite this obstacle, there are many brave souls and competent NGO leaders, on both sides, who continue to work together on social coexistence and cooperation projects. They need and richly deserve our intensified support, especially at this time when high-level political efforts are stymied. I would even go further, and say that these people-to-people programmes are among the very best long-term investments we can all make in promoting the possibility of peace. This is much more than just feel good symbolism; it really matters, and it really works. It worked in Northern Ireland, in Rwanda, and elsewhere, where it proved to be a crucial missing link in resolving equally bloody and entrenched ethnic or sectarian conflicts. The more these people-to-people projects can be scaled up, the more they are likely to make a major positive difference. There is currently a bipartisan bill, HR 1489, to create an International Fund for precisely that purpose. I respectfully urge you to give this bill your full support, in the firm conviction that it will pay multiple dividends in the coming years.”

The most recent Quartet report recommended a focus on civil society work for the first time since its founding suggesting:

“Both parties should foster a climate of tolerance, including through increasing interaction and cooperation in a variety of fields – economic, professional, educational, cultural – that strengthen the foundations for peace and countering extremism.”

The governments of Japan, Canada, Germany, Sweden, Jordan, Morocco and Italy have all been briefed on the initiative as well as extensive work with the Governments of Israel and the Palestinian Authority.



Helping the Campaign

Take Action

If you want to help our campaign to support the creation of an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace, please visit lfi.org.uk/campaigns

Initially, we're asking our supporters to write to the Secretary of State for International Development, urging her to support the creation of this fund and increase spending on coexistence projects as a way of helping to bring about a lasting and meaningful peace in the Middle East.

There will be more ways to get involved as the campaign progresses over the months to come, so stay in touch through our weekly bulletin, Key Issues. If you're not already a subscriber to it, please sign up now by visiting lfi.org.uk/support

Case Study: The Abraham Fund Initiative

The Abraham Fund Initiatives is a not-for-profit organisation working since 1989 to promote coexistence and equality among Israel's Jewish and Arab-Palestinian citizens. It works towards a prosperous, secure and just society by promoting policies based on innovative social models, conducting large-scale initiatives, advocacy and public education. Current initiatives include teaching Arabic language and culture in Jewish schools throughout Israel, at the same time exposing Arab children to Jewish Israeli culture; providing job opportunities and a pathway out of poverty for never-employed Arab women; helping neighbouring Jewish and Arab mayors plan new health centres and colleges, together; and transforming the way the Israel Police, other branches of government, civil society and the private sector serve the Arab citizens of the state.

Language as a Cultural Bridge – the cornerstone of The Abraham Fund's Education for a Shared Society Initiative – works to mandate the teaching of Arabic language and culture for all Jewish students in Israel's public schools, while enriching Hebrew language and culture in Arab schools. Already reaching more than 25,000 elementary school-aged children across Israel, The Abraham Fund is helping Jewish and Arab youngsters appreciate and respect the language and culture of their neighbours, with the support of national and municipal governments. Equipped with their new multicultural tool kits, Arab and Jewish youngsters and their teachers meet in ongoing inter-school "Mifgashim" (encounters) to put their learning into action.