

ISRAEL, THE PALESTINIAN TERRITORIES, AND THE ARAB-ISRAELI CONFLICT

Overview

The United States Institute of Peace (USIP) is recognized as a leader among American institutions working toward a peaceful resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Institute is trusted in Washington D.C. and the region and approaches the conflict through the lens of our institutional mission of peacebuilding, applying that goal with equal concern for all stakeholders. Accordingly, the Institute is seen as a hospitable place and partner for a range of organizations and individuals who focus on the Arab-Israeli conflict from afar, or whose lives are directly impacted by the conflict as inhabitants of the region.

The Arab-Israeli conflict team is housed in USIP's Center for Conflict Management, but our approach is an integrated one that draws on Institute expertise and resources to address the conflict through policy-relevant analysis; innovative peace-oriented programming; cooperation and partnership with local organizations and initiatives; educational training; specialized publications; and the support of outside research and programmatic initiatives through a highly selective grants program.

Since the early 1990s, the Institute has

- published more than two dozen books and monographs on the Arab-Israeli conflict, including several that have been widely used within the U.S. government;
- provided more than two hundred grants—totaling more than \$7 million—to academics, educational institutions, and nongovernmental organizations addressing various aspects of the Arab-Israeli conflict;
- supported the work of more than twenty senior resident fellows and doctoral scholars—among them Israelis, Arabs, Americans, and Europeans—who have worked on issues related to the Arab-Israeli conflict while at USIP;
- partnered with dozens of Arab and Israeli civil society organizations and religious groups that promote conflict resolution and peaceful coexistence;
- offered policy advice through bipartisan commissions like the Iraq Study Group and the Senior Working Group on Middle East Peace; and
- facilitated high-level dialogue between Israeli and Palestinian justice officials.

USIP's Approach

USIP's approach to the conflict is to work both top-down and bottom-up. We address it from the perspective of government-to-government conflict resolution efforts—both of the parties and of external government actors. At the same time, we

engage at the grassroots level, working to foster ground conditions that could stimulate official diplomatic efforts and supporting diplomatic breakthroughs that require popular support to ensure long-term success.

Against the current backdrop of a stalled peace process, there are three priority focal points of the Institute's Arab-Israeli work:

- the role of outside actors in Arab-Israeli Peacemaking, lessons learned and opportunities for constructive engagement by the U.S. and other international stakeholders;
- Palestinian State and Institution Building, preserving and sustaining progress on the ground; and
- internal divides: assessing and addressing the role of Israeli and Palestinian domestic conflict drivers and obstacles to peace.

USIP's Work

The Role of Outside Actors in Arab-Israeli Peacemaking

Since the early 1990s, major U.S. and international diplomatic initiatives have failed to gain traction despite earlier successes. USIP has engaged in a series of projects designed to address those areas of inquiry that have received little attention by scholars and analysts of the conflict, drawing lessons from past mediation efforts and identifying steps for moving the process forward.

- Between 2009 and 2012, the bipartisan Senior Working Group on Middle East Peace developed innovative ideas for reviving peace negotiations. This blue-ribbon panel, led by former national security advisers Samuel R. Berger and Stephen J. Hadley, comprises top scholars, former negotiators, and former members of Congress. The group has shared and discussed its proposals with the highest levels of the Obama administration.
- In November 2011, USIP held a day-long event to mark the twentieth anniversary of the Madrid peace conference, titled *Twenty Years after Madrid: Lessons Learned and the Way Forward for Arab-Israeli Peacemaking*. Co-hosted with the Baker Institute for Public Policy, the conference used lessons from the past to explore new ideas for moving forward. In addition to former secretary of state James Baker III, and former national security advisers Stephen Hadley and Zbigniew Brzezinski, speakers and participants ranged from former and current U.S., Israeli, and Arab diplomats, politicians, and policymakers to academics, business people, and activists.
- Between 2007 and 2012, the Institute's Study Group on Arab-Israeli Peacemaking, co-chaired by former U.S. ambassador to Egypt and Israel, Daniel Kurtzer, and former USIP senior research associate Scott Lasensky, examined best practices in American efforts to mediate the Arab-Israeli conflict, and published a widely cited study *Negotiating Arab-Israeli Peace: American Leadership in the Middle East*. The group's forthcoming book, *The Peace Puzzle: America's Quest for Arab-Israeli Peace, 1989–2011*, offers a detailed history and assessment of U.S. involvement in the peace process over the last two decades. The Institute's work in this vein began twenty years ago with the publication of *Making Peace Among Arabs and Israelis*.
- The 2006 bipartisan Iraq Study Group, co-chaired by former secretary of state James Baker III, and former U.S. congressman Lee Hamilton, contains a number of recommendations for U.S. policy on the Middle East peace process as part of an overall shift in the U.S. approach to Iraq.

Palestinian State-Building: preserving and sustaining progress on the ground

Since 2002, the international community—led by the United States—has dramatically raised the profile of and lent support to Palestinian efforts to strengthen its public institutions and the structures, processes, and governance mechanisms of a future Palestinian state. In this context, USIP played a key role in advising matters of rule of law and Palestinian justice sector reform. Against the backdrop of a stalled political and diplomatic process, USIP's engagement aims to prevent a deterioration of conditions on the ground, and foster a supportive environment for the renewal of a diplomatic track.

- Building on more than a decade of work on the topic, USIP senior scholar in residence Neil Kritz serves as a rule of law adviser to the Office of the Quartet Representative in Jerusalem, advising Israeli and Palestinian officials on matters of justice sector reform and bilateral cooperation. Kritz's work is conducted in collaboration and consultation with the Palestinian and Israeli ministries of Justice, the State Department, and various international actors relevant to the project. Working to ensure that rule of law is a priority in Israel and the Palestinian territories, Kritz

focuses on strengthening the Palestinian justice sector while facilitating better relations between Palestinian and Israeli justice and security officials.

- The Institute provides ongoing assistance to the reconstituted Palestinian-Israeli Joint Legal Committee, which was first established in 2000 when the Israeli and Palestinian Ministers of Justice requested that USIP organize a special dialogue on legal matters. At roundtables and follow-on working groups in Israel and the Palestinian territories, members of the two legal communities and foreign experts have discussed practical legal issues affecting the daily interaction of the two systems, considered relevant examples of legal relations between neighboring countries around the world, and proposed solutions to common problems. Through Kritz's current work with the reestablished committee, USIP builds professional relationships between the two legal communities and enables them to jointly explore and resolve a range of issues.

Addressing Internal Divides

For more than two decades, USIP has worked quietly on the ground to provide opportunities for Arabs and Israelis to meet face to face and devise practical solutions to the issues that divide them. The Institute has brought together Arab and Jewish educators, parliamentary aides, Justice Ministry officials, university leaders, and current and former negotiators. The Institute also recognizes that many fault lines exist *within* Israeli and Palestinian societies that have implications for the broader conflict and pose a challenge to Israeli, Palestinian, and international efforts to resolve it.

- Since 2010, USIP has been working with the "Talking Peace" initiative in Israel, which has successfully brought some of the most influential rabbinic leaders of the settlements into constructive discourse about Middle East Peace with prominent leaders and thinkers from the Israeli center and left. Through facilitated dialogue, these individuals work together to reconstitute a more inclusive peace movement in the region and broaden the circles of participants and methods of discourse about peace in Israeli society. The Institute's focus on the significance of internal Israeli divisions is not new. Between 2004–05, the Institute supported efforts undertaken by Harvard Law School to promote dialogue within Israel about the future of Jewish settlements and to examine models for compensation and resettlement.
- Since May 2011, with the support of USIP, The Abraham Fund Initiatives has implemented a police training program aimed at improving the relationship between Israeli police and Arab society by enhancing the scope and quality of services provided to Israel's Arab citizens and by equipping the police with the multicultural skills and awareness required to serve a diverse society.
- Some of the divisions within Palestinian society have historically played out violently on university campuses, where Palestinian factions vie for administration, faculty, and student support. USIP's Academy for International Conflict Management and Peacebuilding has supported the efforts of the Palestinian nongovernmental organization The Center for Applied Research in Education (CARE) in its work to train students and educators in conflict resolution, nonviolence, and facilitation skills. In 2008, Jeffrey Helsing, the Academy's dean of curriculum, conducted a program that culminated in participants signing a nonviolence agreement at Palestinian universities and the establishment of a protocol for security forces to disarm while on campus. USIP's training has ensured that follow-up workshops are now run by a strong core of Palestinian conflict resolution trainers.



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The United States Institute of Peace provides the analysis, training, and tools that prevent and end conflicts, promotes stability, and professionalizes the field of peacebuilding.

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