

Overview of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace

The proposed International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (the Fund) is inspired by the successful model of the International Fund for Ireland that has provided independent, systematic, and legitimate funding to Catholics and Protestants over the past 30 years. The Irish fund helped bring about sustained peace between the two religious sects, despite the many political obstacles and challenges before it. Even today, as the political process has faltered and there is no power-sharing executive, the streets of Belfast are free of bloodshed and violence.

The Irish fund worked because of its unique structure: the Irish and British governments staffed the fund, while both the Catholic and Protestant communities made up the board of directors. This ensured that the fund was independent from government but trusted by each community. The donor nations represented countries that the Catholics trusted (i.e., the United States) and those that the Protestants trusted (i.e., the Commonwealth).

The United States, the European Union, and the rest of the international community – including the private sector – would benefit from the proposed International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace.

The Fund would be governed by a board of Israelis and Palestinians and an international board chair to ensure that there would be no deadlock. The Palestinian Authority and the Government of Israel would each provide a director general to make up the joint secretariat of the Fund, so that while the Fund would be independent of government, it would have a link to each. The donor nations would serve on the advisory board of the Fund selecting the board of directors. The United States would have two advisory board members, one Democrat and one Republican. If having an Israeli-Palestinian board was too ambitious of a start, the board of directors would be made up of the donor nations with Israeli and Palestinian co-chairs.

The Fund would serve as a grant-making body with the mandate of creating a culture of peace, reversing the trends of fear and mistrust that are most prevalent within the youth of each society. This will help guarantee the long-term success of any political resolution between Israelis and Palestinians.

Potential funding gaps that the International Fund could fill:

- 1) Re-enforce hospitals, schools, and daycares around the Israeli communities on the Gaza border. By demonstrating that the international community cares about these communities, the Fund can lay the groundwork for doing real reconciliation programs in the future.
- 2) Build a purpose-built after school programs center in East Jerusalem. Dozens of programs already exist in the region bringing schools and children from across the city together, but there is no shared physical space where they can meet.
- 3) Expand the Hand in Hand bilingual school system to every city in Israel.

- 4) Start community foundations working on micro-enterprises within communities most affected by settlement growth.
- 5) Expand the Near East Foundation Olive Oil Without borders cross-border project (that now has \$23 million in olive oil crossing from the West Bank into Israel) to every agricultural product, concurrently creating attitudinal change and economic growth.
- 6) Establish a natural gas engineering course between a Palestinian and Israeli University to train a much-needed new workforce to work on the Eastern Mediterranean gas finds together.

The Fund will complement the existing international structures that exist (Ad Hoc Liaison Committee and the office of the Quartet) and fill existing gaps in civil society.

Without a dedicated body such as the Fund, the technocratic work of providing basic utilities has no public impact. People expect water and power, but have no idea of the complex arrangements that create their possibility – without creating the linked communal experiences, these populations are deaf to the reality of the interdependence of each other, and international investments fail to have an impact on the populations belief that peace is possible.

The Fund would offer a way to coordinate international actors, creating a civic strategy and a vehicle of Arab states to demonstrate their commitment to the rest of the world without full diplomatic normalization. In addition, the Fund would enable the United States to lead a conversation with EU member states and other actors about co-investing in civic projects, rather than focusing on the recriminations of bad intent.

Through the work of the Fund for Ireland, the Irish youths' attitudes towards one another are improving each year. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the opposite is true. The aim of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace is to reverse that trend through long-term, systemic intervention.

Given the situation on the ground, the need for credible funding that links the United States (essential for Israel) and European (essential for Palestinians) long term goals of peace between the parties has never been greater. The Fund would provide a mechanism for multilateral engagement focused on the future, enabling progression despite the many challenges on the political front.