

Support People-to-People Reconciliation in the Middle East

From: The Honorable Joseph Crowley

Sent By:

Date: 4/3/2013

Dear Colleague:

I hope you will join me in signing the attached letter to Chairwoman Kay Granger and Ranking Member Nita Lowey of the State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee seeking continued support for Middle East people-to-people reconciliation and co-existence programs in FY 2014.

At this time of uncertainty in the Middle East, it is important that we support efforts that promote grassroots cooperation between Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews in the region – programs that are also vital to U.S. interests. Grassroots reconciliation programs bring everyday people together in support of peace and obtaining mutual social, political and economic gains. Additionally, they work to promote national security interests by reducing violence, advancing reconciliation and providing an antidote to anti-U.S. propaganda. And, they can play a role in increasing the likelihood that any high-level deals reached in the future can be sustained in part through grassroots buy-in and understanding.

To date, these competitive grants administered by USAID have supported a variety of programs, including:

- Cross-border sports programs engaging thousands of Israeli and Palestinian children and young adults, including training in gender equality;
- “Hand-in-Hand” community schools, teaching shared culture and values to children in three languages;
- An historical narrative project bringing a group of 500 Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost loved ones in the conflict to collaborate on spreading a message of reconciliation.

Please join me in ensuring the efforts of grassroots reconciliation programs continue in the Middle East by signing a letter asking for at least \$10 million in FY 2014 for people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation programs expressly dedicated to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is identical to the amount appropriated in FY 2013. If you would like to sign on or need more information, please contact Jeremy Woodrum in my office at jeremy.woodrum@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

April 15, 2013

The Honorable Kay Granger
Chair

U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
HT2, U.S. Capitol Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Ranking Member

U.S. House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
2365 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Granger and Ranking Member Lowey:

We want to thank the Subcommittee for its commitment to peace-building programs and non-governmental organizations that promote people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation around the world, particularly in the Middle East. In these uncertain times, people-to-people programs – bringing individuals of different ethnic, religious, and political backgrounds together to solve problems and lay the groundwork for peace – are more important than ever. For FY 2010, the House approved \$11 million for people-to-people reconciliation and coexistence programs in the Middle East. In FYs 2011, 2012, and 2013, \$10 million was appropriated for these programs. We urge your continued support for at least \$10 million in funding to foster reconciliation between Arab and Israeli populations for FY 2014.

As we all recognize, addressing conflict in the Middle East is an important part of U.S. security and foreign policy. As part of that effort, Congress appropriates funds for Middle East coexistence to help bring people together at the grassroots level to find ways to increase understanding and reduce violence. These funds have a record of success in bringing together ordinary Israelis and Palestinians to work jointly on educational programs, business cooperation, sports activities, community development and inter-religious dialogue. Through numerous non-governmental organizations, these funds serve to engage thousands on the ground to cooperate in projects, break down barriers and stereotypes, and change attitudes, while building trust and a foundation for sustainable peace.

Additionally, these programs have helped to reduce violence on the ground and enhance non-violent reconciliation efforts to effectuate change and provide an antidote to anti-U.S. propaganda. This “track II diplomacy” is an important U.S. foreign policy tool in laying the groundwork for sustaining the success of any high-level negotiations.

To support this work, we urge the Subcommittee to provide \$10 million in funding focused exclusively on people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

We request your help in continuing this program at current levels in times that call for significant commitment to peace building and reconciliation among Israelis and Palestinians in the Middle East.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,