

People-to-People Middle East Peace

From: The Honorable Joseph Crowley

Date: 3/11/2010

Supporting Funding for People-to-People Coexistence Programs in the Middle East

This is a program request

Deadline for Signatures, March 17th

Dear Colleague:

I hope you will join me in signing the attached letter to Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger 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 FY2011.

At this challenging time facing the Middle East, it is vital that we continue to support non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote peace and cooperation among Israelis and Palestinians, Arabs and Jews in the region. Through grassroots reconciliation programs, everyday people can come to understand one another and build positive relationships in support of peace and mutual social, political, and economic gains.

That is why I urge you to join me in requesting increased funding for competitive USAID grants to support this inspiring and practical work. This will build upon the \$10 million appropriated in FY2010 and the \$9 million appropriated in both FY2008 and FY2009.

This USAID funding supports vital grassroots reconciliation programs. In recent years, it has supported a project of 17 Israeli and Palestinian villages working together to clean up their shared water resources and supply schools with clean drinking water; a radio station broadcasting Hebrew and Arabic programming that enables Israelis and Palestinians to engage and communicate directly and peacefully; and sports programs for thousands of kids from different backgrounds. It has effectively continued the funding first started with the Wye River People-to-People Exchange Program, which supported NGO projects to train hundreds of Israeli and Palestinian teachers to incorporate peace education into their classrooms and a group of 500 Palestinian and Israeli families who have lost loved ones in the conflict to collaborate on spreading their message of reconciliation.

Join us in ensuring these critical efforts continue and grow by signing a letter to Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger of the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Subcommittee. The letter asks for \$12 million for people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation between Israelis and Palestinians in FY 2011. If you would like to sign on or need more information, please contact Jeremy Woodrum in Congressman Joseph Crowley's office at jeremy.woodrum@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,

Joseph Crowley
Member of Congress

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The Honorable Nita M. Lowey
Chairwoman, Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
2329 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member, Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs
320 Cannon Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Lowey and Ranking Member Granger:

We write to thank the Subcommittee for its commitment to peace-building programs and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that promote people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation around the world, and particularly in the Middle East, where the work of bringing people together in peace is most desperately needed. In these uncertain times, with the combined hope and challenge of renewed diplomatic negotiations, people-to-people contacts are more critical than ever. For FY10, the House approved \$11 million for USAID-funded people-to-people reconciliation and coexistence programs in the Middle East (\$10 million emerged from conference). We urge you to expand this critical funding for FY 2011.

As we all recognize, solving the Arab-Israeli conflict retains a key role at the heart of U.S. security and foreign policy. For this reason, Congress appropriated \$9 million in funding for Middle East coexistence in FY 2008. These funds have

demonstrated the impact of bringing together ordinary Israeli and Palestinian citizens to work jointly on educational programs, business cooperation, sports activities, recreation centers, healthcare initiatives, community development, and inter-religious dialogue. This “track two diplomacy” is a critical U.S. foreign policy tool in laying the groundwork for successful diplomatic efforts.

In order to support this work, we urge the Subcommittee to provide \$12 million in funding focused exclusively on people-to-people coexistence and reconciliation in the Arab-Israeli conflict. The Middle East has a robust network of NGOs working on people-to-people coexistence. A modest level of support will have substantial, rippling effects.

We request your help to lay the groundwork for peace in the Middle East and to support the brave and inspiring Israelis and Palestinians who are willing to reach across conflict lines and work toward peace. Please feel free to have your staff contact Jeremy Woodrum with Rep. Joseph Crowley at jeremy.woodrum@mail.house.gov if we can provide any further information about this request. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,