

Policy Brief

INSTITUTIONALIZING SUPPORT FOR PEACEBUILDING, RESTORING A DIPLOMATIC HORIZON

APRIL 2025



The Need for Multilateralism

Need and Urgency for Coordination on Supporting Civil Society Peacebuilding

The devastating events of October 7th and the Israel-Gaza war which has followed have made clear that the era of conflict management and international deprioritization of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be brought to an end. And that it must be replaced by a new paradigm focused on committed and determined conflict resolution. As difficult and long-term a project as that may be.

In addition to the urgent humanitarian, hostage and ceasefire priorities, as well as the challenging issues of governance and security, it is evident that a clear diplomatic horizon must be restored. **This should involve a more comprehensive and multilateral approach than we have heretofore seen.** It can draw upon the EU, Arab States, G7 members and others to collaborate together on a process that harnesses each actors' insights, resources and legitimacy. All in service of a negotiated agreement that can deliver peace, equality, self-determination and security to all Israelis and Palestinians.

Yet, diplomacy by itself is insufficient. The hard-won agreements of the past ultimately failed without public support.

In addition to and in support of a top-down diplomatic process that aims to resolve final status issues, a complimentary bottom-up process is urgently required that engages both societies at scale. It must aim to rehabilitate two traumatized communities, and clearly articulate and advocate the need for non-violence and meaningful diplomacy as the mechanisms for delivering the security and self-determination each society is entitled to.

And it must also begin building the trust, cooperation and interdependence that true conflict resolution eventually requires. Each side must know it has a partner.

Widespread civil society efforts are essential to scaling the ideas, leaders and institutions that can provide resilient support and political space for a real diplomatic process, especially in the face of well-organized and funded extreme actors in both societies that will oppose conflict resolution. Civil society peacebuilding activities and organizations have long existed in Israel-Palestine, with many of them ready to scale. History is clear: **A serious diplomatic process without an ambitious civil society strategy will not succeed. An ambitious civil society strategy without a serious diplomatic strategy will have limited reach and legitimacy.** Each is essential, and neither can work without the other.

A new G7 policy

It is precisely this same insight that the G7 heads of Government, at the Leaders Summit in June 2024, adopted into the core of their collective policy on Israel-Palestine, with the leaders communiqué reading:

“We affirm our commitment to working together—and with other international partners—to closely coordinate and institutionalize our support for civil society peacebuilding efforts, ensuring that such efforts are part of a larger strategy to build the foundation necessary for a negotiated and lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace.”

The current global trend of shrinking aid budgets makes it increasingly difficult for individual donor states to address complex, long-term conflicts like the one in Israel-Palestine. In the U.S. and across Europe, economic pressures and rising nationalism have led to widespread cuts in development assistance. UK peacebuilding and conflict prevention funding has already dropped by 64% globally between 2016 and 2021.

Italy cut its overseas development aid (ODA) from €6.12 billion in 2022 to €5.5 billion in 2023. The Netherlands plans €3.2 billion in cuts by 2027. France's 2025 budget includes a €2 billion reduction, with aid projected to fall by 11%. Finland and Belgium each announced 25% reductions through 2027. Germany — Europe's most generous donor state and the second largest ODA contributor globally — has announced budget cuts of around €1.6 billion from its key aid ministries this year.

In such a climate, no single donor can shift the trajectory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict alone. However, by pooling resources into a multilateral fund, donor states can maximize the impact of their contributions. Recognizing this, in December 2024, UK Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged his support for an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace and called for an inaugural meeting in London to support civil society in Israel-Palestine.

Such a collective approach would align fragmented donor strategies and protect civil society from political volatility, ensuring that the resources are directed where they are most needed.

Both societies are currently going through enormous transformations marked by fear, trauma, and a collective understanding that the situation is unsustainable. We are seeing protestors on the streets of Gaza and Tel Aviv, with both Palestinians and Israelis angry with the status quo and their leaders. In such a context, the creation of an International Fund would scale and strengthen the work and impact of those working in each society for a just and secure future at a moment when these ideas—and much darker ones—hang in the balance. A 2012 study¹ found that peace agreements involving civil society actors are 64% more likely to succeed. Civil society lends legitimacy, sustains dialogue when official talks stall, and crosses divides that politicians fear. Often, they are the only ones who can.

¹ Desirée Nilsson, “Anchoring the Peace: Civil Society Actors in Peace Accords and Durable Peace,” *International Interactions* 38, no. 2 (April 2012)

What would “coordination” and “institutionalization” look like?

Local Donor Coordination Forum

Establishing a fund will require significant time and resources; however, there are steps that can already be taken to lay the groundwork. Throughout 2024, ALLMEP discussed with donor states the need to convene a local Donor Coordination Forum for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding. Early utilities for the Donor Coordination Forum could include:

- **Resource mapping.** How much funding is in the field? Who is funding what? What trends do donors expect over the next few years? Data gathering and briefings will help donors understand the broader funding context in which they operate and where their own funding and plans fit into the landscape.
- **Proposal sharing.** When donors receive promising project proposals or ideas that don't fit within their budgets, guidelines, or priority areas, a sharing mechanism could enable these donors to redirect potential projects to more appropriate funders if applicants agree with a simple checkbox. It could also help identify additional suitable funders across both government and private actors, each with complementary strengths.
- **Need and opportunity mapping.** What current and evolving needs and challenges can peacebuilding best address? Where, how, and with which populations? Where are there gaps or over-saturation? Which approaches have worked? Mapping opportunities and needs can help inform donor decisions, limit duplication, facilitate scaled partnerships, and allow urgent responses to fast-moving developments.
- **Enhanced donor coordination.** In the course of regular meetings, donors across the field share best practices, experiences, and relevant updates and briefings from their own work and their grantees'. They could identify smaller partnerships among two or more funders to co-fund projects or sectors at a greater scale and impact than is possible when working solo. They could also discuss and align priorities on policy issues with both the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, including those affecting NGO work and funding, de-escalation, and diplomatic progress. The group could rapidly share and deploy information, as well as adopt shared strategies for some or all participants to pursue in order to defend, amplify, and scale civil society.
- **Aligning investments with a broader strategy.** Up until now, peacebuilding funds have been invested in service of varied goals, without attachment to a clear overriding diplomatic strategy. The Forum would allow the larger diplomatic process and its timeline, risks, and opportunities to be the organizing principle for investments, with all funds clearly targeted at a shared goal.
- **Field-wide coordination on impact evaluation metrics.** Donors are uniquely situated to solve a big challenge in the field that will also significantly leverage resources: ensuring that all project implementers have tools and know-how to effectively measure impact. With input from all relevant stakeholders, the Forum could develop a basic set of standardized metrics to evaluate impact in the field across projects. These could be integrated within – rather than replacing – existing evaluation methods. Donors could analyze metrics across their portfolios, and reports on the bird's-eye view of the entire field could

inform future investment and programming. Greater standardization of metrics could also ease the burden on NGO and funder professionals to learn, maintain, and use multiple different reporting frameworks.

- **Other research briefings.** The group can discuss useful research topics, commission briefings and consider implications of findings. It can also benefit from two-way consultations with a future Israeli-Palestinian technical advisory group of practitioner experts, who could work to develop a broad vision, goals and milestones for the field, as well as funder guidelines or principles.

Inspired by ALLMEP's initiative, in November 2024 the EU and the US inaugurated a two-track coordination forum among donor states to better support the peacebuilding field.



An International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace (IFP)

Internationally, there is a similar need for such coordination and institutionalization among capitals, which ALLMEP suggests will take the form of an international fund for Israeli-Palestinian peace (IFP).

This multilateral body would serve to coordinate and scale civil society and conflict resolution investments at a level that would disrupt the very civic, political, and attitudinal conditions which led to the horrific violence on and since October 7th.

The IFP seeks to break the cycle of conflict management that has long dominated the Israeli-Palestinian situation. Short-term solutions have perpetuated violence and suffering, failing to create lasting peace. The IFP promotes a more structured, institutional approach. It shifts from piecemeal solutions to a more sustainable and strategic path for conflict resolution.

A concept like this was successful in other conflict resolution settings: The International Fund for Ireland (IFI), established 12 years before the peace agreement, built the societal and political conditions that successful diplomacy needs. The UK's chief negotiator at the time, and currently serving as the UK's National Security Adviser, Jonathan Powell, rightly called the IFI "the great unsung hero" of the Good Friday Agreement.

The IFI began its work in the late 1980s, when Northern Ireland's Troubles were, within their own context, in a place that elicited similar levels of pessimism and despair to that which we have seen in Israel-Palestine in recent years. **The IFI catalysed a sustained, long-term effort to build relationships and trust even as rejectionists attempted to push back against progress.**

In addition to Northern Ireland, other successful conflict resolution exercises, such as those in South Africa and Colombia, reveal that civil society peacebuilding played a core role in each instance, while rarely receiving media attention.

First, it mitigated and rolled back violence and had a key impact on both the public attitudes and the wider political context, each providing the oxygen that real peace processes depend upon.

Second, it created deep roots that, in each instance, proved critical for societal resilience over the long and bumpy road that conflict resolution entails.

Third, over time it transformed the political incentives within conflicted societies, creating constituencies – and indeed leaders – who support peace and reconciliation.

Fourth, it developed many of the ideas that leaders ultimately borrowed and presented as their own, having helpfully been first established, popularised, and made less politically risky by civil society.

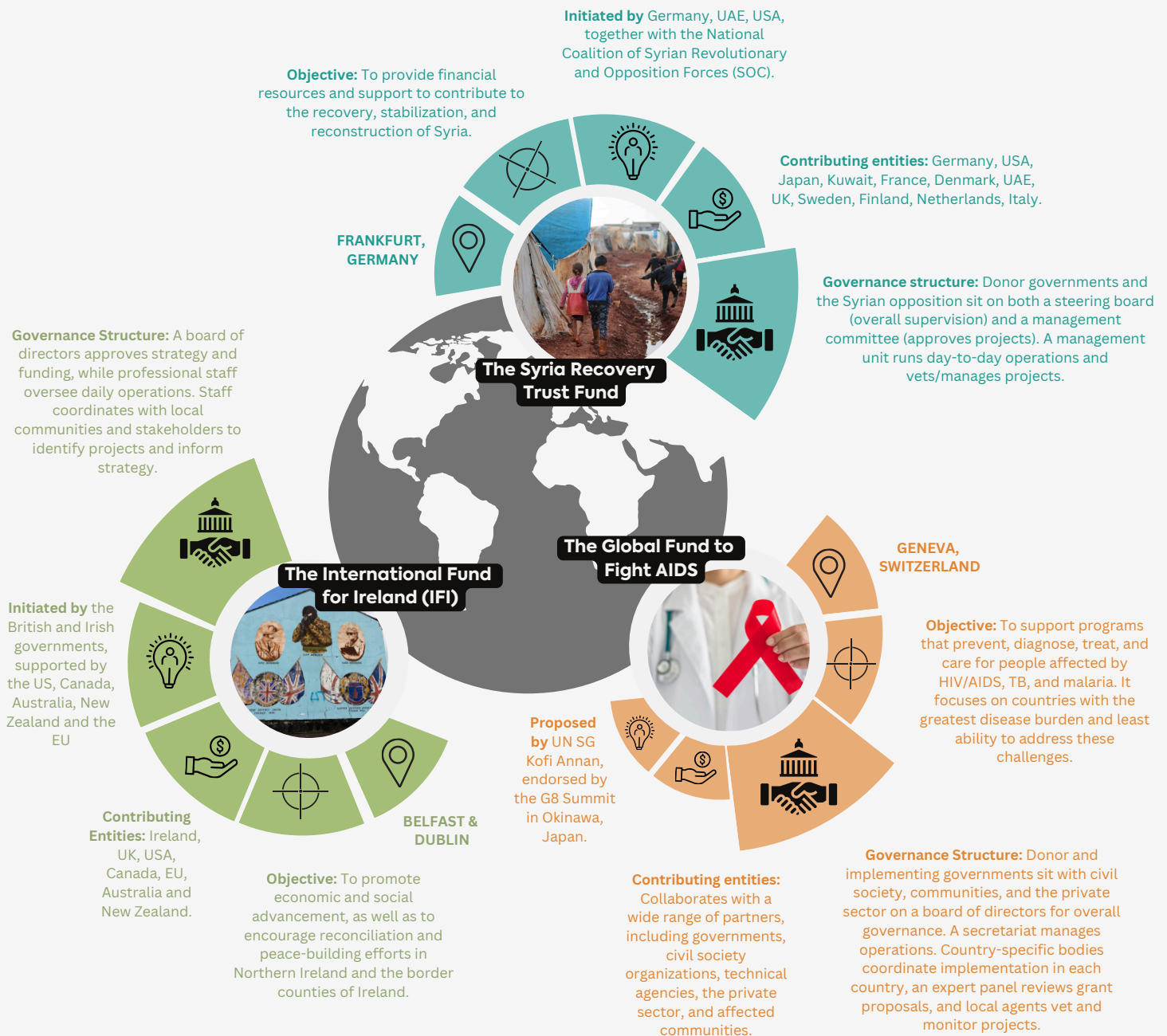
Finally, it helped to create a counterweight to the spoilers that exist in every conflict, and which have grown in strength in recent decades in Israel-Palestine and stand ready to disrupt and oppose any diplomatic process.

A hopeful sign for Israel-Palestine is the presence of civil society peacebuilders who oppose the violence and hatred that dominate the conflict. Despite being underfunded and targeted by extremists, they are dedicated, innovative, and well-connected. This community, working across both societies, fosters empathy, solidarity, and partnership, highlighting the **interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian interests.**

Their efforts offer a viable path toward a sustainable peace, but this requires long-term investment, coordination, and institutional support. Without empowering these key actors, any conflict resolution strategy remains ineffective. After decades of failed diplomacy, Israelis and Palestinians deserve a strategy that addresses these lessons.



Comparative Examples of How Global Funds Are Structured



Why greater coordination is useful and necessary



LEGITIMACY:

Different donors bring different reputations and levels of credibility. By working together, they can more effectively reach different parts of each society.

CONSOLIDATION OF M&E:

Donors working together can streamline monitoring and evaluation, allowing NGOs to adhere to one system, and allowing governments to pool, share and track data for better understanding of what works.



SCALE:

By working together, donors can unlock projects at a scale we've never seen before, pooling their investments so that programs can reach exponentially more people.

STRENGTHENING THE FIELD:

Coordinated international support enhances peacebuilding in Israel and Palestine, boosting the field with unprecedented resources and hope, generating momentum, and pressuring both governments to back the effort while gaining public support.

