

June 12, 2014

Transparency and Due Diligence in U.S. Government Funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs: 2014 Update

SUMMARY

This report, covering 2013 and 2014 (partial information, based on availability), updates NGO Monitor's analyses of U.S. government funding for non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that operate in Israel and the Palestinian Authority. Funding agencies include USAID, the U.S. State Department (through the MEPI program), National Endowment for Democracy (NED), and United States Institute of Peace (USIP), among others.

Our detailed analysis shows that, despite positive changes implemented since our [May 2013 report](#), U.S. funding continues to go to NGOs active in anti-Israel and BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns that directly contradict U.S. government support for peace efforts and democracy promotion. There are also pronounced inconsistencies between the stated objectives and the activities of the NGO grantees. In a number of instances, it appears that grants have been awarded without sufficient due diligence, including independent evaluation of all aspects of grantees.

KEY FINDINGS

NGO Monitor has evaluated U.S. government funding for NGOs claiming to promote peace and human rights, in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict. This report provides an updated review of processes that result in funding for organizations whose activities are inconsistent with U.S. policy and objectives of promoting peace and opposing discrimination campaigns such as BDS (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions).¹

1. Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI) continues to provide incomplete, non-transparent information on its website. The [USAspending website](#), to which MEPI directed NGO Monitor in order to obtain funding details, is convoluted and very difficult to use. MEPI's terse correspondence with NGO Monitor similarly reflects a lack of commitment to transparency.

2. Numerous MEPI-funded NGOs display extreme anti-Israel and antisemitic demonization, including justification of terrorism; use of terms such as "ethnic cleansing," "genocide," and

¹ NGOs funded by the U.S. government also partner with NGOs that are active in demonization and rejectionist campaigns, including the Ma'an Network, Al Haq, Jerusalem Legal Aid & Human Rights Center, MAAT for Peace, Development, and Human Rights, Broderskap Sweden, ARIJ, EAPPI, Adalah-Jordan, DCI, ICHAD, NRC, Palestinian NGOs Network (PNGO), Arab NGO Network, Badil, MIFTAH, and PCHR.

“apartheid”; and comparison of Israel to the Nazis. These NGOs also promote the Kairos Palestine document, as well as BDS campaigns.

3. Reflecting a total lack of transparency, the International Republican Institute (IRI) did not respond to multiple requests for information on its funding of Israeli and Palestinian NGOs. (See Appendix 2.) Independent research shows that [IRI gave \\$154,457 to MIFTAH in 2012](#).

4. In its allocations for 2013 and 2014, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) continues to fund political advocacy NGOs that promote [BDS](#) (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns targeting Israel and contribute to other forms of demonization. NED-funded groups include Al-Dameer, Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution, and Al Maqdese for Society Development.

5. USAID remains the most transparent U.S. government funding mechanism, as reflected in its regularly updated [webpage on NGO funding](#). NED also lists comprehensive information on its website, and USIP responded transparently and extensively to NGO Monitor inquiries.

6. According to NGO Monitor research, most of the USAID projects funded in 2013-2014 appear to be “programs that develop mutual understanding and build ties” between Israeli and Palestinians, without blatant bias or participating in the demonization of Israel.

7. At the same time, a number of USAID grantees, including Sadaka Reut (sub-awardee), Sikkuy, and the Near East Foundation, require close monitoring.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The discontinuation of funding for NGOs that participate in demonization and delegitimization campaigns is an important first step. However, without a rigorous evaluation system, funders are unable to prevent future rounds of problematic funding.

For example, in 2013, NED discontinued funding for the political NGOs MIFTAH, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, Holy Land Trust, Palestinian NGO Network, and Women’s Affairs Technical Committee. However, funding continued for Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR), Al Maqdese for Society Development, and Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights.

2. NGO funding transparency remains inconsistent. As detailed below, MEPI’s lack of transparency creates a significant obstacle to independent evaluation. As noted, IRI has no transparency and did not respond to multiple requests for information on its NGO funding.

3. Attempts to justify funds as designated for specific projects, not NGOs, are artificial and seek to avoid accountability.

4. Programs promoting mutual understanding and narrative sharing are important, but they are also readily exploited and require very close monitoring.

5. Supported by the detailed analysis in this report, NGO Monitor urges U.S. officials to conduct independent evaluations of the NGO activity **before** grant allocation, and **during and after** implementation. As seen in the examples below, the activities and rhetoric of NGO grantees do not always match their stated objectives, which can impact project implementation in many ways. **As such, all U.S. government funding agencies should be required to assess NGO applicants on the basis of the totality of activities and agendas, and not only through narrowly defined projects or claims made by the NGOs themselves (self-reporting).**

The following recommendations, originally proposed in our 2013 report, remain critical:

Before grant allocation

- Potential recipients should be evaluated for consistency with U.S. policy.
- The evaluation process should be broad and include input from multiple sources.
- Funding should be denied to NGOs that engage in demonization, BDS, and other anti-Israel activities, which are contrary to and incompatible with U.S. peace efforts, the promotion of human rights, and democracy building.

During

- Guidelines should be created to regulate situations and reconsider funding where evidence of problematic activities and rhetoric emerges while the grant is ongoing.
- Information about all grants, including detailed descriptions and evaluations of programs, should be posted in a centralized database, as well as on the websites of the managing agency.

After

- Detailed, independent, and public assessments are necessary, both in terms of (a) measuring the efficacy in accomplishing the stated goals of the project and (b) monitoring the full extent of the grantee's activities.

ANALYSIS OF FUNDING FRAMEWORKS

Middle East Partnership Initiative

[The Middle East Partnership Initiative](#) (MEPI) is a division of the Department of State's Near Eastern Affairs Bureau, with offices in the MENA region. The main [regional office](#) is in Tunisia. Local projects in Israel and the West Bank/Gaza are administered by the Consulate in [Jerusalem](#) and Embassy in [Tel Aviv](#).

MEPI offers "assistance, training, and support to groups and individuals striving to create positive change in the society. MEPI works in 18 countries and territories, partnering with civil society organizations (CSOs), community leaders, youth and women activists, and private sector groups to advance their reform efforts. MEPI's approach is bottom-up and grassroots, responding directly to local interests and needs."

MEPI reports being active in the MENA region since 2002, contributing over \$600 million to more than 1,000 grant projects

In response to NGO Monitor questions concerning grants and NGO partners, MEPI representatives in Israel responded laconically and without providing substantive answers. (See Appendix 1.)

According to NGO Monitor research, of the (approximately) 47 NGOs funded by MEPI from 2012-2014, 43 are not inherently biased against Israel.

However, MEPI has also awarded grants to NGOs that support BDS against Israel. Statements from some MEPI grantees have also propagated antisemitism, demonization of Israel, and the merits of terrorism as resistance.

In contrast to counterproductive agendas, the stated objectives of the MEPI-funded projects are positive: combating gender discrimination, promotion of the private sector, and developing opportunities for the youth in the Palestinian Authority. This gap between the stated objectives of MEPI funding for these NGOs and their activities, highlight the need for stronger oversight and in-depth evaluation

Lack of Transparency

MEPI funding notably lacks transparency. There has been minimal change since our 2013 analysis. Though updated programs are listed on its "[Recent MEPI Projects in Israel](#)" page, neither the year nor amount is published, in addition to the list being incomplete. Furthermore, most of the links provided in each synopsis on MEPI's "[featured highlights](#)" page are not functioning and redirect to a "[404 page](#)" ("The Page You are Looking for has Moved). Previous highlighted projects, which were removed from featured page in May or

June 2014, provided inconsistent information from one grant to the next, including omitting dates, partner names and funding amounts, preventing meaningful project comparisons.

MEPI provides a link in its FAQs section to the generic usaspending.gov website as a way to search for MEPI's grants, but no guidance is provided to identify specific MEPI grants for Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza.

After reviewing the unorganized USA Spending database, it appears MEPI has at least 15 projects since 2012 that are not listed anywhere on the MEPI website. There are also projects on the website not located in the USA Spending database.

Additionally, there are discrepancies between funding amounts or project names on the MEPI website and in the USA Spending database.

- For example, the MEPI website features a project, "[Developing Jerusalem's Youth Parliament](#)," without any mention of an organizational partner. On the USA Spending site, there are no results for this project title but there is a project listed under the [Al-Razi Association for Cultural and Societal Affairs](#) with a project entitled "Jerusalem Schools Students Union." There is no mention of Al-Razi on the MEPI website. It is unclear whether these projects are related.
- A second example is the project listed on the MEPI website "[For Our Rights](#)" conducted by Min Ajlina for a 2009 "retreat for Sidre staff members." There are no search results for Min Ajlina on the USA Spending site and Sidre (spelled Sidreh on the USA Spending site) has only [one grant](#) (2012) listed. It is unclear how these projects or organizations are related, who received funds or when funds were received.

Grantees

1) Arab Thought Forum (ATF)

- ATF, based in Jerusalem and Gaza, was awarded \$82,069 from 2013-2014 for the [project](#) "Youth Advocacy Groups as Active Agents of Positive Change in Their Communities."
- ATF's [mission](#) is to act as "...forum for Palestinian decision makers, public opinion leaders and citizens to express their views...The strength of ATF lies in its political impartiality, which allows it to freely engage with a broad range of subjects related to the Palestinian cause of democracy building, and ultimately independence."
- ATF's narrative includes demonizing and antisemitic language: "The Palestinian Holocaust is unsurpassed in history...the ugliest crime of modern times." It also employs terms such as "[apartheid](#)," "[ethnic cleansing](#)," "[genocide](#)," and "[collective](#)

[punishment](#),” and “Zionist massacre”; claims “ Hamas is the expression of Gazan despair”; and promotes BDS ([boycotts, divestment, and sanctions](#)) campaigns.

- Republished an article from PNGO [claiming](#) the goal of the Israeli military is destruction and occupation. The posting suggests “immediate action” including, “We, Palestinian NGOs declare our complete rejection of any aid coming from USAID due to the United States’ constant military and financial support to Israel, or from any other parties whose support to Israel facilitated Israel’s military aggression in the Gaza Strip.”

3) Ma’an Network

- The Ma’an Network was awarded \$71,970 from 2012-2013 for the [project](#) “Combating Gender Based Violence in the Palestinian Territories.”
- Ma’an [claims](#) to be an “independent non-profit media organization working to strengthen nonaffiliated media and consolidate freedom of expression and media pluralism as a means of promoting democracy and human rights.”
- Ma’an News is a platform for the publication of statements by radical Palestinian NGOs, including the [Badil, MIFTAH](#), and [Palestinian Center for Human Rights](#), which promote Palestinian rejectionism, and a highly distorted history that contributes to conflict. Ma’an News’ archive includes many uses of the term “[apartheid](#),” accusations of “[ethnic cleansing](#),” [Holocaust denial](#), and references to terrorism as [resistance](#).
 - Featured an [interview](#) on January 9, 2014 with convicted terrorist Issa Abd Rabbo who stated, “I tied [Israeli soldiers] up of course and then sentenced them to death by shooting, in the name of the revolution. I shot them, one bullet each, and went [hiding] in the mountains... I went to my aunt and told her: ‘We have avenged Muhammad’s blood... She cried out in joy.’”
 - Published the “[Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#)” on February 11, 2014 which [contends](#) that “[the Jews] plans to subjugate the people and control the world.”

4) Wi’am, the Palestinian Conflict Resolution Center

- Wi’am received \$71,661 during 2013 for the [project](#) “Combating Gender Inequality in Property Rights.”
- “[Wi’am](#) aims to improve the quality of relationships and promote peace and reconciliation in the community. It strives alongside other forces present in the community to build a society based on democratic norms and values.”

- Wi'am promotes Palestinians victimization narrative through [antisemitic](#) and [theological](#) rhetoric, claiming "We are the victims of the victims of the holocaust, and thus its direct victims." Utilizes the term "[apartheid wall](#)," promotes the [Kairos Palestine document](#), and encourages "the dream" of a [one-state framework](#). Refers to Israel as "the Oppressor" and Palestinians as "the Oppressed."
- Wi'am [supports](#) BDS.

5) The Al-Mustakbal Foundation for Strategic and Policy

- Al-Mustakbal was awarded \$68,019 from 2012-2013 for the [project](#) "Doing Business in the East Jerusalem Market."
- Provides rationalization for terrorism against Israeli citizens and mocks Israel's need for security.
 - "[Miserable](#) standards of living and lack of economic opportunity will continue to fuel radicalism, making Israel tense. Security concerns may overcome notions of peace and lead to violence spiraling out of control."
 - "...[viewing](#) the problem of 'terrorism' separate from occupation, and requiring security to precede progress on substantive issues [is an impediment]...peace will remain elusive if the United States does not recognize that Israel's occupation is violent, and Palestinian reactionary violence ends when occupation ends."

6) East Jerusalem YMCA

- EJ-YMCA was awarded \$53,265 from 2012-2013 for the [project](#) "Develop Leadership, Teamwork, and Communication Skills for Palestinian Youth."
- EJ-YMCA features its "[Joint Advocacy Initiative](#)" with Palestine YWCA to "to enhance international advocacy work with partners and activists," including projects such as the [Kairos Palestine Campaign](#) and a [BDS](#) (BDS) campaign.
- Examples of "youth programs" conducted by EJ-YWCA include "...a theatrical play performed by Al-Hara Theatre entitled 'The Trap' which demonstrates a model of Israeli intelligence operations to turn Palestinian children into collaborators who betray their people, contradicting all human values, international laws and conventions. The play was produced in cooperation with [DCI-Palestine](#) section."

National Endowment for Democracy

According to its [website](#), National Endowment for Democracy (NED) provides more than 1,000 grants to support NGOs that are “dedicated to the cultural values, institutions, and organizations of democratic pluralism.” NED is funded “largely by the U.S. Congress” and is “[subject to multiple layers](#) of oversight by Congress, the Department of State, and independent financial audit.” These audits are posted through [2011](#).

NGO Monitor’s 2013 report discussed NED funding for NGOs such as MIFTAH, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP), Al-Dameer, Holy Land Trust (HLT), Palestinian NGO Network (PNGO) and Women’s Affairs Technical Committee (WATC). These political advocacy NGOs promote BDS (boycotts, divestment, and sanctions) campaigns targeting Israel, contributed to the discredited Goldstone Report (2009) on the Gaza war, and are active in other forms of demonization.

Since the publication of our report, NED officials have been responsive to questions concerning grants and NGO partners. In correspondence with NGO Monitor, NED provided updated, transparent information about [2013](#) and 2014 funding for NGOs in the West Bank. (See Appendix 3 for full correspondence.)

In this correspondence, NED reported discontinuing funding for most of the NGOs analyzed in previous report, including MIFTAH, Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, Holy Land Trust, Palestinian NGO Network, and Women’s Affairs Technical Committee.

At the same time, NED continues to support some highly problematic NGOs. Of the 13 NGOs funded in 2013-2014, 3 are active in demonization campaigns and other forms of political warfare against Israel, and another requires close monitoring and review due to a lack of transparency.

Grantees

1) Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution (PCDCR)

- Awarded \$57,800 in [2012](#), \$58,300 in [2013](#), and \$48,200 in 2014. The 2014 project aims to “lead 12 roundtables addressing the regional variables on national reconciliation, as well as a conference. The center will lead two five-day training courses for 40 youth on conceptual and practical issues of debate.”
- PCDCR’s [stated mission](#) is to “invest in the democratic experience of Palestinians by supporting the development of an accountable governance system...and investing in an effective and accountable administrative, management and governance structure.”

- PCDCR [supported](#) the discredited 2009 [Goldstone Report](#), refers to Palestinians as “[victims of Gaza holocaust](#),” accuses Israel of “[state terrorism](#),” and participates in discriminatory [campaigns](#) such as “Love in the Time of Apartheid Campaign: The Palestinian Campaign for Repealing Israel’s Racist Law Denying Family Reunification.”
- General Director Saeed el-Maqadmah [published](#) “Impact of Israeli Practices on Development of Children’s Aggressive Behaviour,” citing claims such as “Israeli policies aim to create such imbalance especially for the children who are the heirs to the Palestinian issue.”
 - The publication was followed by a [campaign](#) for “Universal Children Day,” showing the international community the “suffering of the Palestinian children caused by the Israeli occupation and years of blockade.”

2) Al Maqdese for Society Development

- Al Maqdese was awarded \$34,800 in 2012 and \$33,400 in 2013. The 2013 project aimed to “lead 14 rights awareness sessions for 350 Palestinian workers in East Jerusalem.”
- Al Maqdese’s highly politicized [mission](#) is “To maintain the existence of the Palestinian population in Jerusalem by: raising awareness and ensuring protection of their rights; monitoring, documenting, and publicizing the Israeli violations against their rights; and providing advocacy and lobbying tools to protect their rights.”
- [Accuses](#) Israel of “racist,” “ruthless, unforgiving and above all illegal policies” in Jerusalem and “crimes so heinous they make a mockery of international law and Israeli legitimacy.” Refers to an “apartheid wall” and claims Israel is running “a system of abuse and racism masquerading as security.”
- Focuses on Israel’s “intent” to control the Palestinians:
 - Issam Jwehan, director of Al-Maqdese, stated on [PA TV News](#) that Israel uses drugs as “a weapon” to “Judaize Jerusalem.”
 - Al Maqdese published a [report](#) claiming the Israeli authority has imposed laws meant to take control over Arab educational curriculums to further their policy of “Judaizing.”

3) Al-Dameer Association for Human Rights

- Awarded \$31,000 in 2012 and \$32,000 in 2013. The 2013 project aims to “lead five 30-hour courses on human rights standards and application for 150 social and political activists from Gazan universities.”

- Al-Dameer’s mission is stated as, “aims to ensure the development of the principles of internationally recognized human right standards and values in the Gaza Strip.”
- Al-Dameer refers to terrorists as “martyrs” and speaks of the Palestinian “right to resist” through measures of terrorism. The organization [claims](#) there are “an assault of ethnic disinfections against Palestinian civilians,” “war crimes,” and “massacres.” They have [accused](#) Israel of “systematic policies against the civilian population” and “human rights violations perpetrated by Israeli occupation forces... as a form of collective punishment.”
- Perpetuates biases and demonization in publications such as “[Palestinian Jurisdiction Reality](#) & the Prospects for the Prosecution of International Criminals- A Path Towards a New National Strategy” and “[Health and Environmental Problems](#) in the Gaza Strip that Lead to an Increase in the Number of Babies Born with Birth Defects, Abortion, and Cancer Diseases Due to the IOF Use to Radioactive and Toxic Materials during its Latest Offensive on the Strip.”
- [Lobbied](#) for the discredited 2009 Goldstone report and signatory to multiple international initiatives in favor of its skewed recommendations. Participant in several BDS campaigns, including those against the [G4S](#) and [Veolia Environment](#) corporations.

4) Civitas Institute

- The Civitas Institute was awarded \$37,000 in [2012](#), \$36,700 in [2013](#), and \$35,000 in 2014. The 2014 project aims to “engage youth in civic action, oversight to, and interaction with local representatives. Civitas will lead two 6-day training courses on research skills, reporting and documentation, and hearings.”
- Civitas is non-transparent. It does not have a functional website, and its [Facebook page](#) is outdated and provides no further information about Civitas or its partners.
- As stated on its [Facebook page](#), “Civitas is a non-governmental, non-profit, non-partisan and independent organization based in Gaza and was established in Dec., 2001 as an initiative of democrats, young community leaders, journalists, activists, human rights and civil society advocates.”

United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

USAID, the United States’ largest provider of foreign assistance, contributes grants to political advocacy NGOs in Israel through its [Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation](#)

(CMM), which “supports several initiatives to foster peace at the grassroots level through programs that develop mutual understanding and build ties between Israeli and Palestinian youth leaders, religious scholars, environmental scientists, educators and community activists.” [According to USAID](#), “Since the program’s inception in 2004, USAID West Bank and Gaza Mission and U.S. Embassy Tel Aviv have supported 69 Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) grants for Israel, the West Bank and Gaza.”

USAID remains the most transparent, comprehensible U.S. government funding mechanism, as displayed on its website [fact sheet](#), which is regularly updated.

According to NGO Monitor research, of the 21 projects funded from 2013-2014, 18 appear to engage in “programs that develop mutual understanding and build ties” between Israeli and Palestinians, without providing a biased perspective of the conflict or participating in the demonization of Israel. Three exceptions, which require close monitoring and high levels of due diligence, are:

1) Catholic Relief Services (sub-award to Sadaka-Reut)

- CRS was awarded \$1,000,000 in 2011-2014 for the [Gemini Project](#). A sub-award (\$600,876) was distributed to [Sadaka-Reut](#) to implement the project. According to [USAID](#), this program “bring[s] together Palestinian and Jewish youth ages 18-25 for an extended period of dialogue, skill-building, mentoring, and activism. The Gemini Project aims to promote an alternative dialogue to militant rhetoric in Jewish and Palestinian communities.”
- Sadaka-Reut’s description of the Gemini Project reflects a one-sided and biased narrative, singling-out “the process of delegitimizing the Palestinian citizens of Israel” for “deepening the rift between both communities.”
- The Gemini Project is administered by coordinators Yael Tsabari and Rajaa Natour.
 - Tsabari’s [Facebook page](#) includes a link to the campaign “[Love in the Time of Apartheid](#),” suggesting her support for the accusation that Israel is an “apartheid” state.
 - Natour’s [Facebook page](#) exhibits “likes” for numerous politicized Facebook groups including the “[Third Palestinian Intifada](#)” whose goal is to “defeat the occupation of every inch of the land of Palestine” – meaning the area of the State of Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza Strip; The [Insurgency Movement in Palestine](#); the [Samidoun Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network](#); the [Recruitment of Arab Christians Will Not Pass](#) group (that opposes Israeli Arab Christians who join the Israeli army); and [Love in the Time of Apartheid](#).

- Sadaka Reut partners with groups on the extreme fringe that reject the legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty, and repeatedly emphasize the “Nakba” and alleged systematic discrimination in Israel. This includes [Zochrot](#) (with whom they joined for a project called “Introducing the Palestinian Nakba to the Israeli Public”), [Coalition of Women for Peace](#), [Physicians for Human Rights-Israel](#), and [Machsom Watch](#).

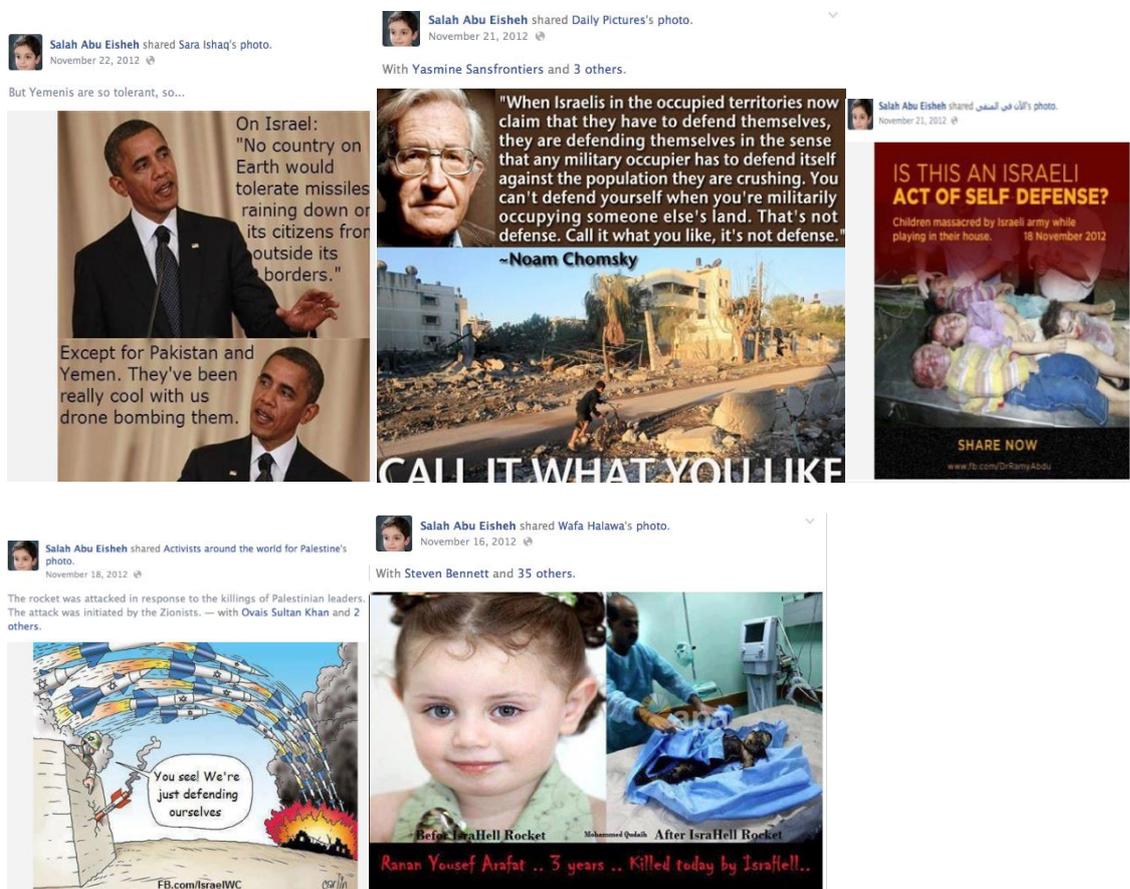
2) Sikkuy: The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality (sub-award to MEJDI)

- Sikkuy’s partner on the USAID-funded project, [MEDJI](#), is founded by CEO Aziz Abu Sarah, who claims to advocate for cooperation and reconciliation efforts. However, his contributions to [+972 Magazine](#) and [National Geographic Magazine](#) have, instead, encouraged an unbalanced focus on the Palestinian perspective, omitting key mainstream Israeli viewpoints. It is unknown what level of due diligence was conducted by USAID on key personnel or officials project partners.
- Sikkuy has [portrayed Israeli-Arabs](#) as an [indigenous minority](#) subject to discrimination, as part of a wider political process seeking to delegitimize the recognition of Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people. Much of this activity occurred under the leadership of Co-executive Director Ali Haider, who has since left the NGO. It is unknown whether this agenda will continue in his absence.
- [Articles](#) published on the Sikkuy site, which promote this narrative, include: “[In Israel, Arabs get less](#)”; “[Treasury official: Gov’t funding biased against Arabs](#)”; “[Does equality stand a chance?](#)”; “[For Arab citizens, Israeli government suffers from split personality.](#)”
- Sikkuy is a signatory to [the Haifa Declaration](#), which calls for the abolishing of the State of Israel, praises violent resistance, and accuses Israel of manipulating the memory of the Holocaust for political purposes.
- Sikkuy (sub-award to MEJDI) for a program “developing tourism programs that will bring large numbers of Jewish Israelis, particularly youth and women, to visit Arab community” (\$898,898 in 2013-2016). The program demonstrates an inherent bias, seeking to encourage Jewish Israelis to understand Arab communities but not vice versa.

3) Near East Foundation (NEF)

- Near East Foundation (NEF) was awarded \$1,200,000 from 2013-2015 for the project “Cross Border Youth Agribusiness Partnership” and “Olive Oil without Borders.”

- NEF’s mission is to “help build more sustainable, prosperous, and inclusive communities in the Middle East and Africa through education, community organizing, and economic development.”
- Although NEF publications do not reflect a blatant bias or ideological agenda, a number of Facebook posts (below) from NEF Palestine Country Director [Salah Abu Eiseh](#), exhibit extreme, and extremely concerning, anti-Israel (and U.S.) rhetoric. It is unknown whether USAID conducted due diligence on key NEF officials before providing this grant.



“Nakba” Commemorations: Hand in Hand, Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel

- Hand in Hand was [awarded](#) \$1.8 million for 2012-2015. The [project](#) “Shared Community/School Integration” seeks to “establish eight Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Arab shared communities; five of these will be built around existing integrated schools, and an additional three in regions without existing schools.”

- Hand in Hand, a “[bilingual, bicultural schools where Jewish and Arab children learn together](#),” holds annual events encouraging the [teaching and celebration](#) of different occasions, including “Nakba Day” (which promotes a highly distorted Palestinian narrative regarding the 1947/8 war.) A flyer for a May 14, 2014 event at the Hand in Hand school in Jerusalem, “[Families Talk about the Nakba](#),” features the USAID logo.
- In a May 13, 2014 email response to NGO Monitor, a USAID official stated, “every year at this time period the schools and communities work intensively to come together in ways allowing for truly listening, learning and understanding what [Hand in Hand] refers to as ‘the National Days’... Holocaust Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day among others.” Requests for further information on USAID funding for the specific event were not forthcoming (as of May 26, 2014).
- While such programs have the potential for engendering mutual understanding, there is also potential for political exploitation to promote biased narratives, thereby adding to the conflict. The example of “Nakba Day” highlights the need for clear guidelines and very close oversight.

Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP)

- Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) continues to play a major role in determining USAID funding for NGOs. ALLMEP is a group [created](#) “to raise the profile of Middle East coexistence in the minds of key stakeholders and policymakers so that these activities would be viewed as a critical part of solving the conflict.”
- ALLMEP claims that its [members](#) are “competing for and implementing USAID grants through more than 100 person-hours of training annually, updates on grant opportunities, meetings with USAID officials, and one-on-one consulting to NGOs seeking funds.” Sikkuy, Hand in Hand, and Parents Circle Family Forum are all ALLMEP members.
- In 2014, 11 out of 22 USAID-funded NGOs are ALLMEP members.
- ALLMEP lobbies Congress (for FY [2009](#), [2011](#), [2013](#), [2014](#)) to provide funding as part of CMM.² On March 1, 2013, Chair of the Policy Committee for ALLMEP, Rabbi Michael Cohen, appeared before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs. He urged the committee “to commit

² According to ALLMEP, it also lobbied [the British Parliament](#) in 2014 to “dramatically enhance funding for people-to-people peacebuilding projects in Israel and Palestine, including participation in our International Fund, and urged site visits to people-to-people peacebuilding NGOs by visiting high level British officials... The British government [published](#) ALLMEP’s evidence.”

in FY 2014, as it has in FYs 2013, 2012 and 2011: \$28 million to the worldwide reconciliation programs funded through the Economic Support Fund in the FY2014 budget; of which \$10 million is dedicated to people-to-people peacebuilding programs in the Middle East, specifically those fostering reconciliation between Arab and Israeli populations.” Cohen did not provide independent evidence or citations to bolster his contention that the programs he supports actually produce the claimed results. The only “evidence” presented are testimonies from senior staff of the organizations themselves – in other words, self-reporting.

United States Institute of Peace USIP

According to its [website](#), USIP “was established by Congress as an independent, federally-funded national security institution devoted to the nonviolent prevention and mitigation of deadly conflict abroad.” With regards to Israel, USIP “seeks to comprehensively address the complexities of its conflict with the Palestinians and the broader Arab world through policy relevant analysis, public outreach and innovative programming with partners in the region, all aimed at building support for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.”

In correspondence with NGO Monitor, USIP wrote that it “has no current grants to Palestinian NGOs.” The correspondence detailed funding to an Israeli organization, Arava Institute, which was awarded \$92,435 for the project “Youth Environmental Education Peace Initiative.”

USIP’s [grant database](#) lists three other projects that currently receive funding.

1) Economic Cooperation Foundation (ECF) was awarded \$120,000 for the project “Revisiting the Paris Protocol” for September 2013 - August 2014.

2) The Abraham Fund Initiatives was awarded \$120,000 for the project “Arab Society - Police Relations Initiative” for June 2011 - May 2014.

3) The Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF) was awarded \$120,000 for the project “Two Sided Story - Public Education Program” for January 2014 - December 2015.

- [The Parents Circle - Families Forum](#) officials often utilize reconciliation projects to promote their personal political views. Presentations and political activities indicate that the NGO is highly ideological, and promotes a one-sided narrative of the conflict. This organization is the subject of intense [controversy](#) and criticism in Israel, particularly from other bereaved parents.
- When NGO Monitor inquired about the PCFF project, USIP responded: “The Parents Circle—Families Forum project falls under [the peaceful resolution] line of work... In this context, it is the Institute’s view that Parents Circle—Families Forum offers an opportunity to those for whom the conflict has exacted its greatest costs to address

both their shared, profound grief and the ongoing conflict through nonviolent means.”
(See Appendix 5 for full correspondence.)

- In correspondence with NGO Monitor, USIP’s Acting President Kristin Lord wrote, “In pursuing those goals and, indeed, in all of its grantmaking, the Institute maintains high standards in its proposal vetting process and in closely monitoring the performance and progress of USIP-funded initiatives. In the case of Parents Circle Families Forum, were the organization to apply for future funding, not only would USIP subject the proposal to this rigorous vetting process, but would also commission, as a matter of course, an independent review of the previous USIP-supported initiative and any products resulting from it.” (See Appendix 5 for full correspondence.)

Appendix 1: Correspondence with Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI)

February 20, 2014

Manal Haddad
Middle East Partnership Initiative
Public Affairs Office
US Embassy Tel Aviv

Re: MEPI funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Ms. Haddad,

NGO Monitor (www.ngo-monitor.org) is preparing an update of our research ([here](#) and [here](#)) on U.S. government funding for NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In order to prepare our forthcoming report, we have the following questions for you:

1. The Embassy website lists “[Recent MEPI Projects in Israel](#),” but does not provide information on amounts or project duration. For each of the grants,

- (a) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (b) What is the duration of each grant?
- (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

2. In addition to those grants listed

- (a) Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs are currently receiving MEPI funding?
- (b) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (c) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (d) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

Please provide your response and any other comments by March 6, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these topics in person.

Sincerely,
Naftali Balanson
Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

March 10, 2014

Dear Mr. Balanson,

Thank you for your inquiry regarding MEPI programs in Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza. Information on MEPI programming is available at the following two websites: <http://mepi.state.gov> and www.usaspending.gov.

Best Regards,

MEPI Office
US Embassy Tel Aviv
<http://israel.usembassy.gov/>

March 27, 2014

Dear Ms. Haddad,

Further to our previous correspondence and your terse response, we note that the U.S. Embassy website has updated its list of "Recent MEPI Projects in Israel" (elsewhere identified as "Current MEPI Local Grants in Israel").

We have a number of follow-up questions based on the new information:

1. Can you please provide details regarding amounts and dates for the two projects that do not appear on the USA Spending website?

- (a) Al Rafah – The Aman Project
- (b) Al Tufla – Center Integration of Women into the Labor Force

2. On the USA Spending website, many of the MEPI grants are presented with incomplete information. For instance, the project summary for the grant to Arab Thought Forum appears to be cut off in the middle. Can you please provide amounts, dates, and complete descriptions for the current MEPI grants?

Please provide your response and any other comments by April 10, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Naftali Balanson

Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

April 8, 2014

Mr. Balanson,

Thank you for your email. Our technical staff is working to input the missing information into our systems, and the www.usaspending.gov website should be updated soon.

Regards,

MEPI Office
US Embassy Tel Aviv
<http://israel.usembassy.gov/>

Appendix 2: Correspondence with International Republican Institute (IRI)

April 3, 2013

Mr. Scott Mastic
Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa
International Republican Institute

Re: IRI Funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Mr. Mastic,

As part of NGO Monitor's research into funding for political advocacy non-governmental organizations (NGOs), we are preparing a report on United States support for NGOs active in Israel and the Palestinian Authority.

We would appreciate your response to the following questions:

1. Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs were funded by NED in 2009-12?
 - (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
 - (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
 - (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?
2. Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs will be funded by NED in 2013?
 - (a) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
 - (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
 - (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?
3. What is the procedure for deciding which groups receive funding? How are on-going and completed projects evaluated?
4. Our research shows that the political advocacy NGO MIFTAH received funds from IRI in 2011 and previously.
 - (a) Does IRI continue to fund MIFTAH?
 - (b) Is IRI aware of MIFTAH's use of hate speech in its publications, such as allegations of "the slaughter of Palestinian children" and "massacre," in order to demonize Israel?
 - (c) Is IRI aware of a March 27, 2013 article posted on MIFTAH's Arabic website, which repeated the classical antisemitic blood libel: "Much of the historical stories and tales about Jewish blood rituals in Europe are based on real rituals and are not false as they claim; the Jews used the blood of Christians in the Jewish Passover ..."

5. IRI's website states, "IRI's West Bank and Gaza program is funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative."

- (a) When did MEPI begin funding IRI's West Bank and Gaza program?
- (b) Does MEPI continue to fund IRI?
- (c) Does IRI's West Bank and Gaza program receive funding from other sources?

Thank you for your attention to these topics. Due to our publication deadline, we request your response by April 17, 2013.

We look forward to continued dialogue with IRI on these important issues.

Sincerely,

Naftali Balanson
Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

April 12, 2013

Dear Mr. Balanson:

Thanks for your email. We too are appalled by the offensive claims made in the article by Nawaf al-Zaru posted on MIFTAH's site on March 27, 2013. We also agree that MIFTAH's initial statement in response to this incident was not satisfactory and note that MIFTAH has since issued an apology and explanation. We have asked MIFTAH for a full account of how this article was selected for inclusion on the group's website as we consider what further actions to take in response to this objectionable incident.

Sincerely,

Scott Mastic
Director
Middle East and North Africa
International Republican Institute

April 17, 2013

Dear Mr. Mastic,

Thank you for your response regarding MIFTAH.

We expect to complete our analysis in the next few days, and look forward to receiving your answers to our other questions shortly.

All the best,
Naftali

July 1, 2013

Dear Mr. Mastic,

I hope this email finds you well.

In May, we published our report (available here), which was greatly enhanced by substantive correspondence with USAID and the National Endowment for Democracy, as well as your comments regarding MIFTAH. Unfortunately, we did not receive your response regarding a number of questions concerning IRI funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs.

In the next few days, we will be publishing an update to our May report, and would appreciate your response to those questions -- which are reproduced here:

1. Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs were funded by NED in 2009-12?
 - (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
 - (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
 - (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?
2. Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs will be funded by NED in 2013?
 - (a) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
 - (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
 - (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?
3. What is the procedure for deciding which groups receive funding? How are on-going and completed projects evaluated?
4. Our research shows that the political advocacy NGO MIFTAH received funds from IRI in 2011 and previously.
 - (a) Does IRI continue to fund MIFTAH?
5. IRI's website states, "IRI's West Bank and Gaza program is funded by the Middle East Partnership Initiative."
 - (a) When did MEPI begin funding IRI's West Bank and Gaza program?
 - (b) Does MEPI continue to fund IRI?
 - (c) Does IRI's West Bank and Gaza program receive funding from other sources?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to these important issues.

Sincerely,
Naftali Balanson

March 12, 2014

Scott Mastic
Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa
International Republican Institute

Re: IRI Funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Mr. Mastic,

NGO Monitor (www.ngo-monitor.org) is preparing an update of our research ([here](#) and [here](#)) on U.S. government funding for NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

For this purpose, we have the following questions:

The IRI's "West Bank & Gaza Overview" lists three NGO partners: Arab World for Research & Development, Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (Miftah), and Wattan TV. However, amounts and project durations are not provided.

1) For these three organizations:

- (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient in 2012 and 2013?
- (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

2) Which other Israeli and Palestinian NGOs were funded by IRI in 2012 and 2013?

- (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

3) Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs will be funded by IRI in 2014?

- (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

4) What actions, if any, did IRI take in response to the March 2013 incident wherein Miftah posted on its website an offensive article by Nawaf al-Zaru?

Please provide your response and any other comments by March 26, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these topics in person.

Sincerely,
Naftali Balanson
Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

April 11, 2014 – to general IRI email address

On March 12, 2014, we sent the email below to Scott Mastic, Regional Director, Middle East and North Africa. However, we have not yet received a response.

We would appreciate a response from IRI by April 21 so that our report on U.S. funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs can reflect updated and accurate information.

Please acknowledge receipt of this email.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.
Naftali Balanson

Appendix 3: Correspondence with National Endowment for Democracy (NED)

February 27, 2014

David Lowe
Vice President, Government Relations & Public Affairs
National Endowment for Democracy

Re: NED funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Mr. Lowe,

NGO Monitor (www.ngo-monitor.org) is preparing an update of our research ([here](#) and [here](#)) on U.S. government funding for NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict. For this purpose, we have the following questions:

On June 11, 2013, you provided us with a link to 2012 grants for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, as well as a list of “Grants Obligated as of June 1, 2013.” We note that the NED website still lists the 2012 grants, but does not appear to have information on grants after 2012.

1. In addition to those grants listed on the website and in the file we received:

- (a) Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs received NED funding in 2013?
- (b) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (c) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (d) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

2. For 2014,

- (a) Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs are receiving NED funding?
- (b) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (c) For which projects are the funds earmarked?
- (d) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

Please provide your response and any other comments by March 13, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these topics in person.

Sincerely,
Naftali Balanson

March 11, 2014

Naftali,

Here are our grants for the West Bank and Gaza for FY2013 and (to date) FY2014.

Regards,

David

2013

<http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/middle-east-and-northern-africa/west-bank-and-gaza-strip>

2014

Grantee: Center for International Private Enterprise

Program Focus: Developing Market Economy

Grant Amount: \$300,000

To foster more comprehensive implementation <http://www.ned.org/where-we-work/middle-east-and-northern-africa/west-bank-and-gaza-strip> of corporate governance principles among companies and to strengthen the capacity and sustainability of PGI to effectively respond to corporate governance needs in Palestine. CIPE will support PGI to advance democracy that delivers for the private sector in Palestine by fostering improved corporate governance in companies and related private sector institutions. In addition, CIPE will work with PGI to develop and implement an organizational sustainability program.

Grantee: Civitas Institute

Program Focus: Accountability

Grant Amount: \$35,000

To engage youth in civic action, oversight to, and interaction with local representatives. Civitas will lead two 6-day training courses on research skills, reporting and documentation, and hearings follow-up for its 70 current Youth Council (YC) members. YCs and Civitas will hold 14 hearings, 9 public meetings, and 70 awareness sessions on the role of citizens, duties and responsibilities, public money, municipalities' roles and services, and the relationship between citizens and their local representatives.

Grantee: National Democratic Institute for International Affairs

Program Focus: Accountability

Grant Amount: \$330,000

To promote opportunities in the West Bank for citizens and representatives of civil society organizations to engage with decisionmakers at the municipal level. NDI would provide technical assistance to the Palestinian Vision and the Omniah Youth Center to design and implement advocacy campaigns on connecting citizens with their elected representatives in Bethlehem, Jenin, and Qabatiya. Through the advocacy campaigns, the organizations would seek to change the relationship between citizens and their elected officials, bringing greater accountability to local councils.

Grantee: Palestinian Center for Democracy and Conflict Resolution
Program Focus: Conflict Resolution
Grant Amount: \$48,200

To fortify the principle of reconciliation among civic sectors of the Palestinian population within the West Bank and Gaza Strip. PCDCR will lead 12 roundtables addressing the regional variables on national reconciliation, as well as a conference. The center will also lead two five-day training courses for 40 youth on conceptual and practical issues of debate. PCDCR will then mentor the youth to conduct four debates on issues such as university tuition, and youth participation in the decision-making process. Additionally, PCDCR will continue to work with its Civil Society Alliance for Social Peace to lead 180 awareness raising sessions on tolerance for secondary school students.

Appendix 4: Correspondence with USAID

February 19, 2014

R. David Harden
Mission Director
USAID West Bank and Gaza

Re: USAID funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Mr. Harden,

NGO Monitor (www.ngo-monitor.org) is preparing an update of our research ([here](#) and [here](#)) on U.S. government funding for NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

In order to prepare our forthcoming report, we have the following questions for you:

1. The Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) Fact Sheet on the Tel Aviv Embassy website appears to be the same version that was posted in June 2013. Indeed, the majority of listed grants have since elapsed. Has the fact sheet been updated since June?
2. In addition to those grants listed in the fact sheet,
 - (a) Which Israeli and Palestinian NGOs are currently receiving USAID funding?
 - (b) What are the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
 - (c) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
 - (d) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

Please provide your response and any other comments by March 6, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these topics in person.

Sincerely,
Naftali Balanson
Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

March 7, 2014

Dear Mr. Balanson,

I appreciate your interest in our Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) programming and thank you for your inquiry regarding the CMM Fact Sheet. I am pleased to pass on the updated information in our new Fact Sheets. Please let me know if you have any further questions.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss them or our CMM programming at your convenience.

Thank you again for your interest.

Dave

R. David Harden
Mission Director
USAID/West Bank & Gaza

May 12, 2014

Mr. Bradley Bessire
Director
Office of Democracy and Governance
USAID/West Bank & Gaza

Re: USAID funding for Hand in Hand “nakba” program

Dear Brad,

A flyer for a May 14, 2014 event at the Hand in Hand school, “[Families Talk about the Nakba](#),” features the USAID logo at the bottom.

We are requesting information on the relationship between USAID and the organization and event:

- 1) Is this event being funded by USAID?
- 2) Has USAID funded previous Hand in Hand programming relating to the “nakba”?

As the event is in two days, we would appreciate a response by Tuesday, May 13, 2014 at 4pm.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Naftali Balanson

May 13, 2014

Hi Naftali,

Thank you for your letter and your interest in our CMM portfolio. I will respond to your specific concerns in the near future. As you know from our website, USAID supports Hand in Hand (HIH), Center for Jewish-Arab Education in Israel, an Israeli organization building peace, coexistence and equality through a network of integrated, bilingual schools for Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Arab children. The project seeks to establish eight Israeli-Jewish and Israeli-Arab shared communities; five of these will be built around existing integrated schools, and an additional three in regions without existing schools. Through these communities HIH seeks to build a collaborative framework that would sustain itself over time, and through the inevitable ups and downs that accompany an ongoing conflict. The founding families realized that this required both communal groups to learn, to understand and appreciate each other's perspectives, most especially regarding the core narratives of the conflict. As part of this learning from others perspectives, every year at this time period the schools and communities work intensively to come together in ways allowing for truly listening, learning and understanding what HIH refers to as "the National Days" – this includes the string of commemorative days that take place every spring and includes Holocaust Day, Memorial Day and Independence Day among others.

I will get you further information as soon as we have it.

Thanks again for your continued interest.

Brad

Appendix 5: Correspondence with United States Institute of Peace (USIP)

March 5, 2014

Steven Riskin
Special Assistant to the President for Grants
United States Institute of Peace

Re: Questions on USIP funding for Israeli and Palestinian NGOs

Dear Mr. Riskin,

NGO Monitor (www.ngo-monitor.org) is preparing an update of our research ([here](#) and [here](#)) on U.S. government funding for NGOs active in the Arab-Israeli conflict.

For this purpose, we have the following questions:

Using the “[Funded Grant Search Tool](#),” we have identified ongoing grants for Parents Circle – Families Forum, Economic Cooperation Foundation, and Abraham Fund Initiatives.

1. Are any other Israeli and Palestinian NGOs currently receiving USIP funding? If so,

- (a) What were the amounts provided to each NGO recipient?
- (b) For which projects were the funds earmarked?
- (c) Is this information publicly available? If so, how can it be retrieved?

2. A February 7, 2013 discussion, hosted by USIP, dealt with a Parents Circle film, “Two Sided Story.” As reflected in the available video of this event on YouTube, the Parents Circle representatives (as well as most of the other participants) project a strong Palestinian narrative to the conflict. All of the references in the discussion of reconciliation concerned changing the perceptions of Israeli Jews alone, without considering changes to Palestinian perceptions.

- (a) To what degree does USIP assess the clip of the film, which was shown at the discussion, as reflecting the narrative provided by the entire film?
- (b) Are the comments made by Bassam Aramin and Robi Damelin at the USIP event representative of their approaches to the conflict and toward reconciliation?
- (c) In what ways does the Parents Circle project and film contribute to peace by also questioning the Palestinian narrative of victimhood and rejectionism?

Please provide your response and any other comments by March 19, 2014.

We appreciate your help and look forward to continued dialogue with you on these important issues. We would also welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss these topics in person.

Sincerely,

Naftali Balanson
Managing Editor
NGO Monitor

March 18, 2014

Dear Mr. Balanson,

Thank you for your inquiry. The Institute has no current grants to Palestinian NGOs. There is one additional active grant to the following Israeli organization:

--The Arava Institute: (\$92,435). This project will increase intercultural understanding, awareness and contact between Jewish-Israeli and Arab-Israeli high school students using shared environmental issues as a common denominator. Building on the success of a project that educated over 300 Jewish and Arab students in 10 high schools throughout Israel, the applicant seeks to scale the network to 14 high schools, and teach another 450 students the skills for cooperation and environmental literacy. The model will also be tested in Jerusalem.

Information about this and all USIP grants is available on the searchable database of grants found on the Institute's website. (See: <http://applications.usip.org/grants/>) Each entry includes the name of the organization, the project director(s), grant amount, fiscal year, start and end date for the grant, and a description of the funded project.

Regarding your other questions, the Parents Circle—Families Forum (PCFF) film, Two-Sided Story, was shown in its entirety at a public event held at USIP in February 2013. Your email inquiry contained a link to a YouTube video of only portions of the film and that event. That video begins with 10 minutes of clips from the film. I am not certain as to how this portion of the YouTube video was designed and produced. USIP frequently webcasts its events. For film screenings, however, because of copyright purposes, we cannot webcast the films and often substitute them with clips or a trailer provided by the filmmaker. The balance of the 53 minute YouTube piece you note includes the full public question and answer session that followed the screening of the film, a session that provided the audience an opportunity to pose their own questions to the two active members—one Israeli and one Palestinian—of the organization.

USIP's mission is to promote the peaceful resolution of international conflict. A component of that mission is exploring and advancing nonviolent approaches to resolving conflict,

including dialogue, negotiation, mediation, and “Track Two” or unofficial diplomatic efforts. People-to-People reconciliation and cooperation activities have been an important focus of USIP’s work in conflict zones around the world, be it with different ethnic and/or religious groups in the Balkans to address the landmine issue, in Kashmir to develop shared approaches to resolving the conflict and to identify and pursue effective confidence building measures, or in Kenya to engage youth in initiatives to avert future election violence. As suggested by previous USIP-funded work on Israeli and Palestinian joint health projects through the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, and the more recent grant to the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies for its joint work on the environment (mentioned above), USIP has been active in this realm with Israelis and Palestinians.

The Parents Circle—Families Forum project falls under this line of work. As you know, the PCFF film focuses on loved ones of those killed by violence and their shared loss; the film uses shared tragedy and individual suffering as a basis from which to find common ground apart from the policies that separate them. The Institute is mindful that PCFF operates in a very sensitive and challenging conflict zone—featuring profound physical and political obstacles—in which opportunities to advance Israeli-Palestinian mutual understanding and peace are limited. In this context, it is the Institute’s view that Parents Circle—Families Forum offers an opportunity to those for whom the conflict has exacted its greatest costs to address both their shared, profound grief and the ongoing conflict through nonviolent means.

I hope this information is helpful. Please let me know if you need additional detail. I look forward to seeing the updated report when it is available. I would be happy to arrange a time to meet should your travel plans bring you to Washington or mine to Israel.

Sincerely,

Steven M. Riskin
Senior Program Officer, Grants
United States Institute of Peace

April 2, 2014

To: Kristin Lord and Steven Riskin
United States Institute of Peace

Re: Concerns regarding U.S. government funding for “Parents Circle Families Forum”

Dear Ms. Lord and Mr. Riskin,

The U.S. government, through USAID and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), has been financially supporting an Israeli-Palestinian organization known as Parents Circle Families Forum (PCFF). From May 2010 – May 2012, USAID granted \$810,000 for PCFF’s “History through the Human Eye” project.[1] Subsequently, USIP funded the production and distribution of a related documentary video, Two Sided Story. In February 2013, USIP hosted a screening of this film and a discussion with officials from PCFF. [2]

Based on detailed evaluation of PCFF’s activities, we urge caution in funding this organization and an independent review prior to any renewal.

We recognize that PCFF’s activities, in general, and this film, in particular, are perceived as important in terms of peace building and dialogue. Without question, the subject matter is emotionally compelling.

At the same time, the emotional impact of this project should not distract from the significant concerns that have arisen from the political messages that PCFF transmits, explicitly and implicitly. (This is in addition to reports that PCFF’s ongoing activities have become increasingly ineffective due to the refusal of Palestinians to participate. [3])

- Robi Damelin is a dominant and visible personality in Parents Circle. As seen in other documentary videos related to PCFF, as well as the February 2013 USIP event, she echoes the Palestinian narrative and exclusively blames Israel for the conflict and its toll.
 - At the USIP event, Damelin refers to an “emotional breakthrough” that PCFF attempts to achieve. She defines this as a process by which secular Israelis gain another perspective on the life of Palestinians and religious Israelis look at Palestinians in a new way. Damelin, however, did not discuss the processes and activities of PCFF, if any, that encourage Palestinians to change their perceptions.
 - Damelin’s asymmetric narrative perpetuates a counterproductive dynamic in which bereaved Palestinians accuse Israel of responsibility for the situation, and Israeli participants also blame Israel. This dynamic is the opposite of the stated goal of acknowledging and respecting differing and opposing narratives, and ignores the perspective of thousands of other Israeli bereaved families who are not represented by PCFF and strongly disagree with their presentation.

- Two Sided Story seeks symmetry and avoids the exclusive Palestinian narrative focus that had been reflected in PCFF activities. Yet, the movie, albeit subtly, also conveys a notion that the Israeli narrative is the problem and must be changed; participants who reject the legitimacy of Israel are not challenged in the film. This imbalance undermines the peace-building aspects of this project.
 - Throughout Two Sided Story, Palestinian participants demand that the Israelis spark a debate in Israel about Palestinian suffering, cling to their narratives that do not include the continued existence of Israel or demand a change in attitude, and reflect upon how the Israelis better appreciate their suffering (see the representative comments at 24:45, 25:20, 46:35-47:20, 47:40-48:45, 1:09:23).
 - In contrast, most Israeli participants challenge their own narratives, convince each other to respect the Palestinian perspective and suffering, and even the most "right-wing" Israeli acknowledges that he understands Palestinian fears and perceptions better (4:40, 17:25, 22:20, 1:06:42-1:07:41)
- Although the USAID and USIP grants are specifically directed at a single project, the scope of the budget and due to fungibility, these allocations inevitably provide general funds, including for salaries, travel, website, and the preparation of additional proposals. Thus, the specific project and overall NGO activities, including the central role of Robi Damelin, cannot be separated.
- The community of bereaved families in Israel is not monolithic, and PCFF cannot be said to represent such families beyond its very limited membership. In fact, some families strenuously object to PCFF's activities, which they consider "exploiting bereavement to raise funds and to promote specific ideological positions." [4]
- In the film, there is no encounter with Israeli families whose civilian relatives, in particular children, were deliberately targeted and murdered in terror attacks. Rather, the Israeli participants are families of soldiers who died in military circumstances (including a helicopter crash). Bereavement resulting from terror, which is all-too-prevalent in Israel, is fundamentally different, but goes unexplored in the Two Sided Story.

On this basis, we recommend that the USIP and USAID undertake a rigorous evaluation process, including independent analysis, which scrutinizes all aspects of the grantee, its leadership, and its full impact.

We look forward to your response and to further discussions of these important and complex issues,

Sincerely,

Prof. Gerald Steinberg
President, NGO Monitor, Jerusalem Israel
and Political Science Department, Bar Ilan University

[1] Executive Summary of “History through the Human Eye” Final Evaluation Report,, November 11, 2012, available at

http://www.theparentscircle.com/SingleEvent.aspx?ID=556#.Uzmyx_mSy_j

[2] Video from this event available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=58h86dcd0w4>

[3] Ophir Bar-Zohar, “Peace activists are sick of talking about soccer,” Haaretz, April 25, 2012, available at <http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/peace-activists-are-sick-of-talking-about-soccer-1.426396>

[4] Frimet and Arnold Roth, “Behind the facade at Parents Circle, messages that are deeply disturbing to bereaved families,” This Ongoing War, July 12, 2013, available at <http://thisongoingwar.blogspot.co.il/2013/07/12-jul-13-behind-facade-at-parents.html>

April 14, 2014

Dear Professor Steinberg:

Thank you for your thoughtful letter of April 2nd regarding USIP funding for the Israeli NGO, Parents Circle Families Forum. I appreciate your taking the time to write about your concerns—concerns that the Institute takes seriously.

As Mr. Riskin noted in his March 18th response to Mr. Balanson, USIP has long been active in supporting “Track Two” unofficial diplomatic efforts, people-to-people dialogue, and peacebuilding activities in difficult zones of conflict around the world. As such, the Institute is mindful of the often daunting challenges in both attempting to advance cooperation and reconciliation in those contexts and developing successful models that will have utility in other countries and regions in conflict.

In pursuing those goals and, indeed, in all of its grantmaking, the Institute maintains high standards in its proposal vetting process and in closely monitoring the performance and progress of USIP-funded initiatives. In the case of Parents Circle Families Forum, were the organization to apply for future funding, not only would USIP subject the proposal to this rigorous vetting process, but would also commission, as a matter of course, an independent review of the previous USIP-supported initiative and any products resulting from it.

I want to again thank you for your careful attention to USIP-funded projects and we look forward to continuing the discussion on these very challenging efforts to promote peace.

Sincerely,

Kristin M. Lord
Acting President