



A Nationwide Network of Local Interreligious Initiatives Working for Peace in the Middle East

Purpose

Efforts are underway to develop a nationwide network of local interreligious initiatives modeled on the National Initiative, involving local Christian judicatory heads, prominent Pastors, Priests, Rabbis and Imams. In some local areas, an already established interfaith group might take on this role; in other areas local Christian, Jewish and Muslim leaders could create an *ad hoc* committee. The primary purpose is to build a broad, active interreligious constituency to support creative, determined U.S. leadership for Arab-Israeli-Palestinian peace. Local initiatives could also develop relationships with Arab-Jewish peace and reconciliation projects.

Leaders of local interreligious initiatives agree to adopt the "Principles of Cooperation," affirm the statement, "Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope," and agree to endorse the "Twelve Steps for Peace" and the appeals to the U.S. Administration as guidelines for addressing issues.

Principles of Cooperation

- We are American Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders who believe working together for Arab-Israeli peace reflects fundamental teachings in our religious traditions.
- Recognizing and appreciating the bonds many of us have with people on each side of the conflict and how these sometimes cause us to have different and conflicting viewpoints, we believe our areas of agreement are more important than our disagreements, and we commit ourselves to work conscientiously and sensitively to emphasize our common agenda for peace.
- As American religious leaders, echoing the Alexandria Declaration by Middle Eastern Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders, we unequivocally condemn killing of innocents and call for an end to all acts of violence. What each side needs most - real security for Israelis and an end of occupation for Palestinians - cannot be achieved by violence but only by negotiations.
- We support a viable, independent Palestinian state alongside the State of Israel, with enduring peace and security for both peoples.
- We are encouraged by many Israelis and Palestinians who are working together for peace, and we believe that model peace agreements such as the Geneva Accord and People's Voice initiative, as well as earlier official Israeli-Palestinian and Israeli-Syrian negotiations, provide benchmarks, principles and ideas for peace agreements which could be acceptable to majorities on both sides.
- We support U.S. leadership for peace, coordinated with the European Union, the Russian Federation and the United Nations, and consistent with U.N. Security Council Resolutions 242, 338 and 1397. We believe active, determined U.S. leadership and vigorous public monitoring are essential to achieving full implementation of a two state solution.

•We join together to learn from each other and to work in support of active, fair and firm U.S. efforts to help Israel, the Palestinians and the Arab states achieve peace. We seek by our prayers and active work together to build bridges in our communities and broad interreligious cooperation and action for peace.

What Local Interreligious "Walk the Road to Peace" Initiatives Can Do

Local initiatives will decide what activities would be most effective in their communities. Suggestions for activities include three categories: education, advocacy and partnership building for peace.

- Getting started, local religious leaders join together supporting the “Principles of Cooperation,” and the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope;” they launch their local initiative with a press conference and possibly an op-ed article or a newspaper ad signed by the leaders.
- Organize a forum with a speaker from the National Initiative and a panel of local Jewish, Christian and Muslim leaders as respondents.
- Publicize the Interreligious Initiative and an appeal to the U.S. Administration in local congregations. Sponsor a public interreligious witness, possibly a "Walk for Peace" or a caravan from a synagogue to a church or a mosque.
- Arrange for a local interreligious team to meet with your Senators and Representatives to inform them of the initiative and urge their support for active, determined U.S. leadership, including support of the statement, “Arab-Israeli-Palestinian Peace: From Crisis to Hope,” the appeals to the President, and the “Twelve Steps for Peace.”
- Invite Israeli and Palestinian speakers, e.g., from the Geneva Accord, People's Voice, One Voice, and Parents Circle (Bereaved Families).
- Develop a connection and build an ongoing partnership between your community and one or more of the Arab-Jewish peace and reconciliation projects, provide support for their work, including publicity, fundraising, etc.

**To support the National Initiative or for more information about developing a local initiative,
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