

## A future for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding

Ned Lazarus

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The Israel-Palestine conflict is one of the most heavily researched in the world. Yet a shockingly small fraction of this research focuses on the millions of Israelis and Palestinians who share this land, their relations with one another, and how such relations could be improved so that a breakthrough might be possible. This report is both timely and necessary, and can hopefully provide a blueprint for greater international support of civil society efforts to foster conflict resolution.

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BICOM, the Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre, is an independent British think tank producing research and analysis to increase understanding of Israel and the Middle East in the UK.

*Fathom: for a deeper understanding of Israel and the region* is BICOM's online research journal, publishing interviews, articles and reviews from a range of Israeli, Palestinian and international contributors.

*Front Cover Photo: EcoPeace's Israeli, Jordanian and Palestinian directors and staff standing together in the Jordan River as part of their campaign to rehabilitate the river which is dwindling due to diversion of its source waters and pollution. Photograph used by permission of EcoPeace.*

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It is my hope, above all, that this report justly reflects their dedicated work in relentlessly challenging conditions.

## Contents

Preface: Jonathan Powell	p. 4
Foreword: Building constituencies of peace, by James Sorene and Professor Alan Johnson	p. 6
Executive Summary	p. 8
Introduction: Hope amid hopelessness	p. 12
<b>Part 1. Mapping the contemporary peacebuilding field</b>	<b>p. 17</b>
1.1 Defining peacebuilding	p. 18
<i>Chart 1: Target populations of peacebuilding initiatives by identity/citizenship/residency</i>	p. 20
<i>Chart 2: Annual revenues in most recent declared budget (FY 2013-2015)</i>	p. 20
<i>Chart 3: Origin of currently active peacebuilding initiatives, by decade</i>	p. 21
1.2 Diverse repertoire, limited reach	p. 21
<i>Chart 4: Methods and strategies employed by active peacebuilding initiatives</i>	p. 21
<i>Chart 5: Target issues/demographics for peacebuilding initiatives</i>	p. 22
<b>Part 2. The state of peacebuilding today: four case studies</b>	<b>p. 16</b>
2.1 Peacebuilding in 2016: eclectic, embattled, resilient	p. 24
Case study 1: Anti-racism and religious dialogue	p. 24
Case study 2: Education for shared living	p. 26
2.2 Achieving policy change: Sikkuy and Eco-Peace	p. 28
Case study 3: Creating a shared society: Sikkuy	p. 28
Case study 4: “Water can’t wait”: the achievements of EcoPeace	p. 29
<b>Part 3. The history of peacebuilding</b>	<b>p. 31</b>
3.1 Beginnings	p. 31
<i>Chart 6: Origin of peacebuilding initiatives by historical turning points</i>	p. 31
3.2 Begin, Sadat and the emergence of the Peace Camp	p. 32
3.3 Arab-Jewish dialogue: the emergence of coexistence projects	p. 33
3.4 Watershed: Intifada, human rights and action on track two	p. 33
3.5 The Oslo era: “peace process” and “people-to-people”	p. 34
3.6 Crisis and perseverance: the Second Intifada and the era of separation	p. 35
3.7 The contemporary peacebuilding community	p. 36
3.8 Professionalisation: the emergence of an evaluation culture	p. 37
<b>Part 4. Evaluating peacebuilding: the research record</b>	<b>p. 38</b>
4.1. Peacebuilding and the age of evaluation	p. 38
4.2 “Will seeds of peace ever bloom?” Evaluating the impact of a generation of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding projects	p. 39
4.3 The evidence base: measuring the impact of peacebuilding programmes on attitudes	p. 43
<i>Chart 7: Activity of Seeds of Peace alumni over time (initial participation years 1993-2002)</i>	p. 45
4.4 Impact factors which encourage long-term engagement in peacebuilding	p. 46
Sustained follow-up activity	p. 46
Conflict content	p. 46
Intergroup friendship	p. 47
Skills-development and professional training	p. 47

Dual-narrative approach	p. 48
4.5 Intergroup immersion: integrated bilingual education	p. 48
4.6 Mainstreaming: Arab teachers at Jewish schools	p. 49
4.7 The future of evaluation	p. 51
<b>Part 5. Navigating the obstacles to peacebuilding</b>	<b>p. 53</b>
5.1 Mutually reinforcing financial and political pressures	p. 53
5.2 Asymmetries of power, status and resource	p. 55
5.3 “Legitimacy deficit disorder”	p. 58
<i>Chart 8. Palestinian public opinion regarding joint activities with Israelis</i>	p. 61
5.4 Broadening legitimacy in Israeli society	p. 62
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>p. 65</b>
Annex: Methodology	p. 69
Works Cited	p. 70

## Preface

By Jonathan Powell

The great unsung hero of the Northern Ireland peace process was not actually a person, but a fund. The International Fund for Ireland (IFI), by supporting intercommunal civil society engagement from 1986, contributed hugely to the support given by majorities of nationalists and unionists to the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

The Fund promoted economic and community development; stimulated dialogue and cooperation within and between divided communities; tackled the underlying causes of sectarianism and violence and fostered reconciliation.

I am in no doubt that the Fund was essential in consolidating peace.

While the Northern Ireland Peace Process can't be used as a template to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – every conflict is different; its causes are different and its solution will be different – we know that long-term grassroots peacebuilding between the contending parties is essential in every conflict-resolution process.

However, the sums spent to date by the IFI vastly exceed what has been invested in Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding: more than 900 million Euros in more than 6,000 civil society peacebuilding programmes in Northern Ireland over 32 years. The IFI prepared the ground for peacemaking – it began its work 12 years before the Good Friday Agreement was signed. And it made peace sustainable – its work continues today, 21 years later. Long-term investment in peacebuilding brought real and durable change to relations between nationalists and unionists.

There are signs that this key lesson of Northern Ireland peace process – that peace is a long-term process of building trust between peoples through grassroots engagement as much as top-level talks – is finally being learned.

As this report makes clear, at the international level, there is already increasing recognition of the critical bridging role of civil society during the current impasse in the Middle East peace process. In July 2016 the Middle East Quartet recommended “increasing interaction and cooperation in a variety of fields – economic, professional, educational, cultural – that strengthen the foundations for peace and countering extremism.”

Ned Lazarus' comprehensive study, based on his experience as both an accomplished practitioner and a leading scholar of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, is the most detailed evaluation we have to date of what works and why. It complements the Quartet's recommendations by detailing the past and present of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, and concludes with recommendations for broadening and deepening the impact of this essential work in the future.

The report makes a persuasive case for the UK government to support efforts already underway to establish an International Fund for Israel-Palestine to “scale up” Israeli-Palestinian civil society trust building .

By following the successful precedent of the International Fund for Ireland, the proposed new Fund would provide a consistent, sustainable and transparent funding source equipped to bring to scale the successful models and the best practices discussed here by Lazarus.

It is remarkable how quickly a conflict can shift from being regarded as “insoluble” to one whose solution was “inevitable” as soon as an agreement is signed. Beforehand, and even up to a very late stage in the process, conventional wisdom states that the conflict can never be resolved; but before the ink is dry on the agreement, people are ready to conclude that it was inevitable.

Just as no conflict is insoluble, nor is it inevitable that it will be resolved at any particular moment in history. Believing that a solution is inevitable is nearly as dangerous as believing a conflict cannot be solved. If people sit around waiting for a conflict to be “ripe” for talks to start, or for the forces of history to solve it for them, then it will never be resolved.

This invaluable report helps us avoid both despair and euphoria. Instead, it suggests a practical course of action for governments and civil society organisations that want to move from vicious cycles to virtuous circles.

We need to be honest with ourselves. A quarter century after the Oslo agreements, more and more people now understand that there is no easy short-cut to peace between Israelis and Palestinians. They sense that in the real world it is as the poet wrote: “peace comes dropping slow”. This report is invaluable to those who would strain every sinew to help it drop nonetheless.

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## Foreword: Building constituencies of peace

By James Sorene and Professor Alan Jonhson

In 2017 the UK Parliament debated a cross-party Bill in support of the International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace. The Rt Hon. Joan Ryan MP, moving the bill in the House of Commons, argued that supporting those people building strong constituencies for peace in Israel and Palestine is a practical contribution that the government can make to the peace process.

Polling by the Israeli Democracy Institute and Palestinian Centre for Policy and Survey Research last summer underlined why Ryan was correct.

While 59 per cent of Israelis and 51 per cent of Palestinians still support a two-state solution, these already slim majorities are fragile and threatened by growing fear and distrust between the two peoples.

Eighty-nine per cent of Palestinians believe Israeli Jews are untrustworthy; a feeling reciprocated by 68 per cent of the latter. At the same time, 65 per cent of Israeli Jews fear Palestinians and 45 per cent of Palestinians fear Israeli Jews.

During the debate in the UK parliament several MPs – including the Conservative Rt Hon. Eric Pickles and the Liberal Democrat MP the Rt Hon. Alistair Carmichael – reminded the House that a seed of the Northern Ireland Good Friday Agreement was sown at the height of the troubles, when the International Fund for Ireland was created.

They pointed out that over the past 30 years, the Fund has promoted economic and social progress and encouraged contact, dialogue and reconciliation between nationalists and unionists throughout Ireland. That investment helped create the popular support which has sustained the Good Friday Agreement over nearly two decades.

An International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peace – an idea designed by the Alliance for Middle East Peace, a coalition of over 100 organisations building people-to-people cooperation and coexistence – aims to increase public and private contributions worldwide, funding civil society and economic development projects that promote coexistence, peace and reconciliation.

This report, written by Ned Lazarus – who combines vast practical experience with academic expertise in peacebuilding studies – shows that [\*peacebuilding works\*](#). More than that, his landmark study draws on a huge body of evidence from academic and governmental evaluations to show what works and why. As well as being a history of the peacebuilding field, this is a practical guide for practitioners and funders replete with informative case studies of the measurable impact that the right kind of peacebuilding projects can have, despite the considerable challenges they face.

Now is the time to increase support for peacebuilding projects.

The Middle East Quartet's most recent report recommended a focus on civil society work for the first time since its founding.

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) under the leadership of Priti Patel is considering more funding for these projects and we urge the government to expand its support.

Support for peacebuilding is strong and growing in all the UK political parties.

No, face-to-face peacebuilding can't do it all. There is no route to a final peace that does not involve direct negotiations between the parties, excruciating compromises on both sides and a final status agreement to establish two states for two peoples. Nonetheless, as this report shows, unless we build constituencies and cultures of peace in each society, those negotiations will continue to lack the environment they need to succeed.

That's why governments should act with what Martin Luther King Jr. once called "the fierce urgency of now".

*James Sorene*  
*CEO, Britain Israel Communications and Research Centre*

*Professor Alan Johnson*  
*Editor of Fathom*

## Executive Summary

This report, based on a comprehensive literature review and extensive fieldwork in Israel and the West Bank in 2016, provides a detailed portrait of the Israeli-Palestinian civil society peacebuilding field.

It begins with an overview of contemporary activity, encompassing both “cross-border” initiatives involving Israelis and Palestinians in the Palestinian territories, and “shared society” initiatives involving Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel. Ensuing sections chronicle the evolution of the field in historical context, illustrate the diversity of the contemporary field, and provide an empirical record for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding gleaned from academic literature and programme evaluations – highlighting models and strategies that have achieved positive outcomes and meaningful impact.

The report notes limitations of civil society peacebuilding imposed by the absence of a viable peace process, and given the inherent challenges of power asymmetry and societal legitimacy. Ultimately, the report advocates establishment of a mechanism for sustained international support for civil society peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians, to be framed within a paradigm of long-term conflict transformation rather than as an adjunct of the Track One process.

### Key Points

1. The current macro-political context of the Middle East is profoundly challenging for civil society initiatives associated with “peace.” Trends at the official political level in each relevant sphere – local Israeli and Palestinian, regional/Middle Eastern, European and American - all militate against the emergence of a diplomatic horizon. This atmosphere has emboldened militant opponents of contact with “the other side,” in both Israeli and Palestinian societies.
2. The contemporary civil society peacebuilding field remains nonetheless vital, methodologically diverse and resilient. A baseline number of at least 164 civil society initiatives currently engage in peace, conflict resolution, or cross-conflict civil and human rights work in Israel and the Palestinian territories, in addition to academic programmes in Conflict Resolution, research centres and a host of less formal initiatives. These include 104 initiatives founded in the 21st century, and at least 60 veteran organisations established in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s. Organisational capacity and resources vary widely; funding is uneven. Published financial data was available for roughly half of the initiatives in our sample; of these, approximately one-quarter (39 NGOs) declared annual revenues exceeding one million USD.
3. Initiatives most commonly employ classic approaches such as advocacy, dialogue, education, protest and “Track Two” diplomacy – yet growing numbers of projects integrate peacebuilding into practical fields such as economic development, environmental protection, health/medicine and

The report advocates the establishment of a mechanism for international support for peacebuilding between Israelis and Palestinians within a paradigm of long-term conflict transformation rather than as an adjunct of the Track-One process.

technology, among others. Veteran organisations have adapted strategies in response to the volatile context, and a number have evolved into multi-dimensional peacebuilding “platforms” using diverse methods to address multiple issues. Youth are the most common target population, but growing numbers of projects focus on women and religiously or politically conservative constituencies not typically identified with the “peace camp.”

4. Sustained advocacy campaigns led by veteran peacebuilding civil society organisations (CSOs) have registered significant policy impacts during the term of the current Israeli government – spearheading an historic reform of its allocation of resources to Arab citizens, and vastly expanding allocation of water resources to Palestinians in the territories, among other examples.

**A substantial research record now exists regarding the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions, based on two decades of empirical scholarship and evaluation reports.**

5. The rise of the extreme Right in Israel has generated a degree of counter-mobilisation among some mainstream elements in Israeli society. Israel’s President Reuven Rivlin is the most prominent of a number of longtime Right-wing politicians now advocating inclusive politics toward Arab citizens, respect for human rights, the rule of law, diversity, and expressing consistent opposition to incitement

and violence. These values are publicly espoused by Orthodox religious figures such as Rabbi Binyamin Lau and Adina Bar Shalom, founder of the Ultra-Orthodox Haredi College – both members of prestigious rabbinical families. There is growing interest and legitimation of integrated bi-lingual educational frameworks such as the Hand-in-Hand school network, which has doubled in size in three years and has a waiting list of hundreds of families – among other “touchpoints” of cross-cultural shared space established by CSOs, particularly in Jerusalem, Haifa, and other mixed cities.

6. International funding programmes – particularly the EU Peacebuilding Fund and USAID/CMM Annual Program Statement fund – have contributed to a professionalisation of leading organisations in terms of monitoring and evaluation. A substantial research record now exists regarding the outcomes of peacebuilding interventions, based on two decades of empirical scholarship and evaluation reports.
7. The research record validates the effectiveness of leading intervention models in terms of humanising participants’ perceptions of the other and enhancing participants’ motivation for longer-term engagement in peacebuilding activity. Notable examples include:
  - Longitudinal studies of three intergroup encounter programmes found profound long-term impact for significant numbers of adult graduates, 10 to 15 years after their initial encounter experiences (Lazarus & Ross 2015). The most comprehensive study found at least 144 alumni of the Seeds of Peace programme working for more than 40 different peacebuilding initiatives as adults – representing 17.5 per cent of the first ten groups of Israeli and Palestinian participants (Lazarus 2011).
  - Multiple shorter-term studies have found dialogue encounters and peace education interventions resulting in significant, positive attitudinal

change in terms of personal empowerment, critical thinking, and humanised perceptions of the other (Salomon 2004; Ross 2015). Over time, a “re-entry effect” diminishing these attitudinal changes is also clearly documented (Hammack 2006). However, follow-up activities or meetings and/or intergroup friendships are also documented as having a “restoration effect,” increasing the sustainability of positive attitudinal shifts and their subsequent expression in social action (Salomon 2009; Schroeder and Risen 2016).

- Similar effects have been documented for adult encounter programmes. For example, summative evaluation of the “History through the Human Eye” dialogue project, led by the Parents Circle Families Forum, found 80 per cent reported greater willingness to work for peace; 77 per cent reported increased belief in the possibility of reconciliation; 71 per cent improved trust and empathy for the other; and 68 per cent increased levels of acknowledgment and knowledge about the other narrative (Kahanoff & Shibly, 2014).
- Research identifies a number of “best practices” for programme design cited as enhancing the depth and sustainability of positive outcomes, including the combination of uni-national and bi-national dialogue, opportunities to build cross-conflict relationships, a “mixed” approach combining trust-building, interpersonal interaction with explicit focus on conflict content and/or social change in discussions, and substantial follow-up activity after completion of the initial encounter programme (Maddy-Weitzman 2005; CMM 2014).
- A pair of programmes designed to integrate Arab teachers in Israeli Jewish schools, led by The Abraham Fund Initiatives and the Merchavim organisation, have documented consistent positive effects in terms of prejudice reduction among students. Both programmes have been officially adopted by Israel’s Ministry of Education as part of plans to reach hundreds of schools across the country (Schneider, 2016).
- A growing number of practical interventions are designed to tangibly address areas of shared interest or common problems – especially in the “cross-border” realm involving Israeli Jews and Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. The research record is less extensive in this field, but some projects have documented promising results. In one example, the Near East Foundation (NEF) Olive Oil Without Borders project has worked with 3,400 Palestinian and Israeli olive producers since 2013, facilitating the export of 4500 tonnes of olive oil from the West Bank to Israel and producing 25 million dollars in income for Palestinian farmers. The project has also documented positive results in terms of attitudinal change: 90 per cent of participants reported increased trust in “the other” and 77 per cent indicated intention to continue cross-border cooperation (Benjamin, 2016).

Successful models for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding have been established through a generation of work, under extremely challenging conditions. To achieve broader, longer-term societal impact, it will be necessary to bring such efforts to scale.

8. Peacebuilding efforts are inherently complicated by stark asymmetries of power and cultural differences between Israelis and Palestinians and between Jews and Arabs in Israel, and peace advocates struggle with chronic legitimacy deficits in both societies. While positive results for peacebuilding interventions are frequently documented at the individual and local/communal

The IFI began its work 12 years before the Good Friday Agreements were signed – and continues today, 21 years later – long-term investment can bring lasting change to intergroup relations in a conflict environment.

levels, the hostile sociopolitical context limits the broader impact of most, though not all, interventions to those individuals, institutions or communities directly involved.

9. Successful models for Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding have been established through a generation of work, under extremely challenging conditions. To achieve broader, longer-term societal impact, it will be necessary to bring such efforts to scale – to significantly expand the scope of programming and make targeted efforts to reach more diverse participant populations. Given

the political climate in the region, scaling effective models to achieve broader societal impact will require sustained international funding.

A promising precedent is set by the *International Fund for Ireland* (IFI), which has:

- Invested more than 900 million Euros in more than 6,000 civil society peacebuilding programmes in Northern Ireland over 32 years (Johnston, 2017).
- Sustained long-term peacebuilding. The IFI began its work 12 years before the Good Friday Agreements were signed – and continues today, 21 years later – reflecting the type of long-term investment that can bring lasting change to intergroup relations in an intractable conflict environment.
- Promoted economic and community development, dialogue and cooperation within and between divided communities, tackle the underlying causes of sectarianism and violence and build reconciliation between people and within and between communities throughout the island of Ireland.<sup>1</sup>
- Consolidated the peace. In November 2015, the Fund unveiled plans to allocate up to £45m towards a range of peace and reconciliation programmes over a five-year period through its [‘Community Consolidation – Peace Consolidation 2016-2020’ Strategy](#).<sup>2</sup>

1. See “Celebrating 30 years of the International Fund for Ireland”, 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NHDG-IMaggTE>

2. “International Fund for Ireland launches five-year ‘Community Consolidation’ strategy”, 2015. <https://www.internationalfundforireland.com/media-centre/123-press-releases-2015/706-international-fund-for-ireland-launches-five-year-community-consolidation-strategy>

## Introduction: Women Wage Peace offer hope amid hopelessness

In today's polarised Israel-Palestine debate, there are two propositions to which all sides might agree: June 2017 marked 50 years of Israeli military rule over the West Bank and the Palestinian population, and nothing in Israeli, Palestinian, regional or international politics indicates any imminent change in the situation. The collapse of the "Kerry Process" in 2014 left negotiations stalemated – and subsequent Israeli and US elections seem to have left advocates of renewed diplomatic efforts checkmated.



*Women Wage Peace demonstrating at the Knesset, 31 October 2016. Photograph used by permission of Ned Lazarus.*

Several trends militate against the emergence of a diplomatic horizon. Israel's current government, commonly described as "the most right-wing in the country's history", commands a stable majority in the Knesset. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu recently declined opportunities to add the centre-left Labour Party to his coalition and begin peace talks in a regional framework led by Egypt and Jordan (Ravid, 2017). The Palestinian political arena has long been paralysed by divisions between and within rival factions Fatah and Hamas, with eyes increasingly fixed on the eventual succession of octogenarian President Mahmoud Abbas. The attention of the Arab World remains riveted on civil wars in Iraq, Syria and Yemen, while the West is consumed with Europe's migration crisis and the populist backlash shaking the foundations of the post-Cold War liberal order, fueling the "Brexit" referendum and the election of Donald Trump as President of the United States.

Israel's radical Right reacted euphorically to these trends, anticipating that the spectre of American pressure would no longer be invoked to deter accelerated construction of "facts on the ground" in the West Bank, if not outright annexation. As a candidate, the new President vowed to move the US Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, and named a prospective ambassador who has made donations to support Jewish settlements in the Palestinian territories (Kershner, 2017). As President, Trump has sent mixed messages on the Middle East. On the one hand, he has refrained from the promised Embassy move and repeatedly stated his intention to achieve a peace agreement, while on the other hand expressing ambivalence regarding the two-state solution (Chandler, 2017). In short, effective renewal of the peace process seems an unlikely prospect. For advocates of a

negotiated Israeli-Palestinian peace, the immediate future has seldom looked bleaker.

At the civil society level, the lack of political progress has exacerbated the chronic legitimacy crisis faced by initiatives working across the Israeli-Palestinian divide (CMM Field Study, 2014). “People-to-people” work has been stigmatised in Palestine and marginalised in Israel, even as it has been eulogised in the media (Kalman, 2014). Since the Second Intifada, each new round of war, with their increasingly asymmetric casualty counts, has exacted a toll in programmes postponed, relations strained and spirits broken. Reserves of hope – always a scarce resource in recent years – may have hit an all-time low.

It might seem counter-intuitive, against this grim backdrop, to organise a “*March of Hope*.” Yet, in October 2016, tens of thousands of women, Arab and Jewish, Israeli and Palestinian, marched together throughout the country under precisely that banner, urging the Israeli government to renew pursuit of a peace agreement. A new civil society organisation, “Women Wage Peace” (WWP), orchestrated a remarkable two-week series of marches and public rallies in dozens of towns throughout the country, culminating in approximately 4,000 Israeli and Palestinian women ascending the ancient desert road together from Jericho to Jerusalem, where they joined 20,000 protestors outside the Prime Minister’s residence. In the process, they illustrated the enduring potential of grassroots organising, and the resonance – even today – of a well-crafted campaign of peace advocacy.

Buoyed by the campaign’s success, WWP went on to maintain a vigil outside the Knesset, drawing supportive speeches from opposition lawmakers and garnering sympathetic coverage in the previously skeptical Israeli media. Social media amplified their audience within and beyond the country: a news clip featuring evocative footage of jubilant Arab and Jewish women clad in white, striding together through a barren biblical landscape, drew more than 19 *million* views (Negev, 2016).

While surprising in its scope, the movement did not emerge out of nowhere. The “*March of Hope*” manifested the value of long-term investments in civil society initiatives for peace and social change. The consciousness, the leadership, the motivation, the connections, and the strategy of WWP were all incubated over decades – through myriad campaigns, forums and projects that built networks able to leverage years of experience at a critical moment.

Many of the leaders were veterans of campaigns about peace, coexistence, equality and/or women’s rights (Langer-Gal, 2016). Orna Shimoni – known to Israelis as the leader of the late 1990s “*Four Mothers*” protest movement that successfully campaigned to end Israel’s 18-year occupation of a self-declared “security zone” in southern Lebanon – conspicuously stood at the front of the line. Huda Abu Arqoub, Regional Director of the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP), led the contingent of 1,000 Palestinian women from throughout the West Bank. She electrified the crowd in Jerusalem by declaring “*You have a partner!*” in simultaneous defiance of apathetic Israeli conventional wisdom, and of Palestinian opponents of contact with Israeli civil society.

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WWP began the series of marches in cities on Israel's geographic and socioeconomic "periphery," signaling their intention to expand beyond the traditional "peace camp" elite and to draw leaders from diverse communities (Negev, 2016).

WWP first assembled in 2014 as a spontaneous response to the third war in five years between Israel and Hamas – but previous peacebuilding efforts laid the groundwork and provided inspiration. Among other precursors was a two-year "Action 1325" campaign led by the *Itach/Maaki* organisation of Arab and Jewish feminist lawyers, which built a nationwide coalition of women's CSOs promoting Israeli government adoption of the 2000 UN Resolution that requires equal integration of women into diplomatic and security policymaking (Perlmutter, 2014). The "March of Hope" also drew inspiration from Liberian women's successful campaign to end fifteen years of ruinous civil war in their country, as depicted in the film *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* (Reticker, 2008). WWP has screened the film in homes and public venues around the country; one of the Liberian campaign's leaders, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Lymah Gbowee, addressed the marchers at Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam outside Jerusalem (Barakat, 2016).

Indeed, international support – exemplified by the EU Peacebuilding Initiative and USAID/CMM grant programme that have funded more than 200 peacebuilding projects in the past decade, alongside other donors – has been essential to sustaining the cadre of activists who strive to keep "peace" on the public agenda in Israeli and Palestinian societies in such challenging times.<sup>3</sup> It will be equally crucial in sustaining the future of civil society efforts.

## Civil society matters

Any future steps toward two states will necessarily confront the test of a popular vote. Beyond the apparent need to elect governments favorably disposed toward such a solution (and on the Palestinian side, to hold elections at all), in 2014 the Knesset passed the equivalent of a constitutional amendment to require a popular referendum on any future territorial withdrawal (Basic Law: Referendum, 2014). Peace accords have a troubled track record at the ballot box; majorities of voters in Cyprus (2004) and Colombia (2016) rejected painstakingly negotiated treaties aimed at ending decades of conflict. The positive counter-example for Israelis and Palestinians to follow is Northern Ireland, where the International Fund for Ireland has been supporting intercommunal civil society engagement on a mass scale since 1986; this contributed to the support of large majorities for the Good Friday Agreement of 1998 (Fitzduff, 2002). This report recommends the establishment of a similar funding instrument – an International Fund for Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding – in order to provide a consistent, sustainable and transparent funding source to "scale up" successful models and best practices, and achieve wider influence in Israeli and Palestinian societies.

At the international level, there is already increasing recognition of the critical bridging role of civil society during the current impasse in the peace process. The "French Initiative" named civil society one of three priority domains for

The positive counter-example for Israelis and Palestinians to follow is Northern Ireland, where the International Fund for Ireland has been supporting intercommunal civil society engagement on a mass scale since 1986.

3. International funding is not un-controversial; the current Israeli government recently passed an "NGO Law" requiring civil society organisations disclose the degree of their funding that comes from foreign governmental entities, in an attempt to impugn the loyalty of peace and human rights NGOs primarily supported by international donors (Beaumont, 2016). Of course, Israel's radical Right organisations and politicians are equally indebted to international benefactors – in their cases, from the private sector (Civic Leadership, 2016).

international support, and it consulted repeatedly with Israeli and Palestinian peacebuilding NGOs in advance of the January 15th 2017 Paris Peace Conference (Bassist, 2017). The emphasis on civil society echoes the Quartet’s July 2016 recommendation of “increasing interaction and cooperation in a variety of fields – economic, professional, educational, cultural – that strengthen the foundations for peace and countering extremism” (Middle East Quartet, 2016).

This report seeks to complement the Quartet’s recommendation – detailing the past and present of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, and concluding with recommendations for broadening and deepening the impact of this essential work in the future.



Combatants for Peace “Freedom March” at the “Tunnels Checkpoint” near Bethlehem, 16 July 2016. The sign reads “this is a non-violent march.” Photograph used by permission of Ned Lazarus.

## Structure of the report

Part 1 provides a *map of the contemporary field*, encompassing both “cross-border” projects concerning the Palestinian territories, and “shared society” initiatives involving Jewish and Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel - noting the range of methods and strategies employed, target populations, and annual revenues of peacebuilding NGOs among other information.

Part 2 examines *the state of peacebuilding today*, highlighting four case studies of contemporary initiatives that have demonstrated growth and concrete policy impact, even in present political conditions.

Part 3 explains *the history of the Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding field*, describing its evolution in relation to the volatile conflict context.

Part 4 examines *the empirical record of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding*, gleaned from academic literature and programme evaluations, highlighting models and strategies that appear worthy of sustained support.

Part 5 *identifies obstacles* exacerbated by the absence of a viable peace process, particularly financial short-termism, power asymmetry and the struggle for societal legitimacy.

The report concludes with detailed recommendations to policy-makers. In general, it argues for the vital importance of sustained support for civil society peacebuilding within a framework of long-term conflict transformation. As the research record detailed here illustrates, a consistent focus on cultivating local cross-conflict networks and capacities for peace will serve the future interests of Israelis, Palestinians and the international community – all the more so in an era of conflict irresolution.

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## Part 1. Mapping the contemporary peacebuilding field

This section provides a detailed overview of the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding field, including methodology, target populations, annual revenues and other characteristics.

Despite the political impasse, militant opposition from ideological opponents, and the inertia of the “silent majority” in both societies, Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding remains a vital, diverse and resilient

**Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding has endured, diversified and evolved. Individual organisations have closed doors, re-branded or rebooted, but peacebuilding methodologies have steadily grown in quantity and sophistication. Strategies employed for cross-conflict engagement have grown from the classic models of advocacy, dialogue, education and protest to the eclecticism of current practice.**

field. The Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) NGO network recently added its 100th member; the present research finds a baseline number of at least 164 organisations currently engaged in peace, conflict resolution, or cross-conflict civil and human rights work in Israel and the Palestinian territories, as well as at least nine degree-granting academic programmes in Conflict Resolution, multiple research centres and a host of less formal, local initiatives.<sup>4</sup> Evaluation and scholarship have validated the effectiveness of numerous intervention strategies, and as noted above – particularly in the sphere of Arab-Jewish relations in Israel – models are beginning to be officially adopted and scaled, and sustained advocacy campaigns have achieved meaningful policy impact.

At the same time, peacebuilding remains controversial and far from achieving its potential reach in both societies. 164 active organisations are but a fraction of more than 20,000 active registered NGOs in Israeli civil society (Civic Leadership, 2016); the proportion is smaller yet in Palestinian civil society, in which any cooperation with Israeli civic initiatives is inevitably branded as “normalisation of the occupation”. Palestinian peacebuilding advocates commonly experience harassment from anti-normalisation activists, whose bullying tactics typically include blacklisting, threats and occasional disruption of Israeli-Palestinian meetings.<sup>5</sup> In Israel, vandalism, verbal and sometimes physical attacks against “Leftists” have become a cause célèbre on the extreme Right, whose militant street activists are buoyed by the rhetoric of “friends in high places” in the current government (Eglash & Booth, 2016).

Donor fatigue, opposition and marginalisation have taken a toll; the field is prone to volatility and organisational “turnover.” In recent years a number of veteran organisations have closed doors, downscaled or reset strategy, even as new initiatives like Women Wage Peace have risen to prominence. Alongside at least 164 active organisations, the present research finds at least 77 initiatives that have either ceased to exist (41) or whose status is unclear at present (36), some closing after a decade or more of activity.

Nonetheless, the *civic repertoire* of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding has endured, diversified and evolved. Individual organisations have closed doors,

4. This figure does not include any number of organisations whose primary focus is not peacebuilding, but have secured grants for peacebuilding projects on a limited basis. See EU Peacebuilding Fund and USAID/CMM Annual Programme Statement Fund for examples.

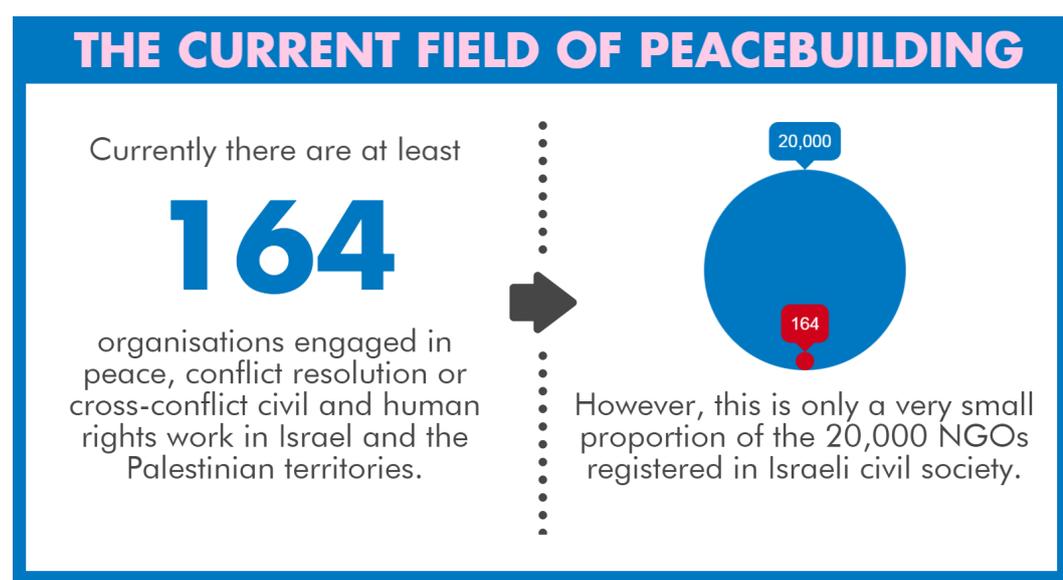
5. Opinion ranges within Palestinian society regarding “anti-normalisation.” In 2016 Mustafa Barghouti, Palestinian civil society activist and former presidential candidate said, “I don’t think there is anything that can be called a joint peace movement. We don’t accept them. They are normalisation projects used by Israel and certain foreign countries to normalise the situation.” In 2014, for example, a two-day ‘Minds of Peace’ conference in Ramallah in the West Bank was broken up by anti-normalisation activists, who hung a poster over the hotel entrance stating: “Normalisation [with Israel] is an act of treason.” An attempt to reconvene in Jerusalem was also disrupted. One activist stated at the time, “We reject any normalisation meeting. Jerusalem is an Arab city and it will remain so”. Palestinian peacebuilding activists, by contrast, typically frame engagement with Israelis as a crucial avenue for advocating Palestinian rights. Palestinian peacebuilding advocate Aziz Abu Sarah, for example, argues that, “‘normalisation’ has become an out-moded term, a catch-all argument against Israeli-Arab cooperative efforts and a cover for character assassination in Palestinian politics”. Anti-normalisation and Palestinian public opinion of joint peacebuilding is discussed in detail in section 5.2.

re-branded or rebooted, but peacebuilding methodologies have steadily grown in quantity and sophistication. Dozens of viable organisations have been established in each of the last three decades, while the strategies employed for cross-conflict engagement have grown from the classic models of advocacy, dialogue, education and protest to the eclecticism of current practice.

The field of Israeli-Palestinian peacebuilding, at present, is thus significantly larger than commonly assumed, yet too small to achieve the macro-political changes to which it aspires. The report now provides a detailed overview of the organisational ecology of the contemporary field.

### 1.1 Defining peacebuilding

The present report defines “peacebuilding” as voluntary civic engagement in organised non-violent social or political activity aimed at transforming perceptions, policies and/or structural/sociopolitical relations between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs with aspirations to contribute to longer-term resolution of intergroup conflict. This broad definition encompasses a wide range of social action forms, in line with the international recognition that diverse activities can contribute to conflict transformation, violence reduction, and the building of more just and peaceful societies.



The repertoire of Israeli-Palestinian civil society peacebuilding activity has evolved in step with the evolution of the international field. The United Nations (UN) officially coined the term in its 1992 report *An Agenda for Peace*; a 2008 OECD/DAC guidance report affirms its rapid expansion, defining peacebuilding as “an overarching term for an entire range of actions designed to contribute to building a culture of peace ... peacebuilding covers a broad range of measures implemented in the context of emerging, current or post-conflict situations and which are explicitly guided and motivated by a primary commitment to the prevention of violent conflict and the promotion of a lasting and sustainable peace” (OECD/DAC, 2008).

Numerous definitions of peacebuilding emphasise the *goal* of long-term transformation of conflict rather than the specific methods employed.

Ropers (1995) describes the aim of peacebuilding as “change in the social structures underlying the conflict, and a change in the attitudes of the parties to the conflict”; Morris explains that “[peacebuilding] involves a full range of approaches, processes, and stages needed for transformation toward more sustainable, peaceful relationships and governance modes and structures” (Ramsbotham et al. 2014). In international development frameworks, peacebuilding funds have allocated resources to a broad spectrum of activities in conflicts around the world – all of which are visible in the Israeli-Palestinian field.

The spectrum ranges from globally connected organisations annually raising several million dollars and implementing dozens of projects, to informal collectives of a handful of activists.

At the same time, in taking this expansive view of the field, there are several caveats to bear in mind.

First, it is important to note that “peacebuilding” as defined here encompasses some activities beyond the traditional sphere of activity classified locally as “people-to-people” (P2P) – such that the present list includes up to 22 organisations that identify primarily as human or civil rights (8) or anti-occupation (14) as opposed to “peace” initiatives per se. The work of these other organisations nonetheless typically involves cooperation and substantial interaction of Israeli Jews and Palestinians, and substantially concerns and impacts the dynamics of Israeli/Palestinian intergroup relations. At the same time, it is critical to acknowledge the substantial differences, methodological and philosophical/political, that often prevail between initiatives classified together under the broad “peacebuilding” rubric.

Second, the civil society peacebuilding field described here encompasses two different political spheres: “Shared Society” work involving Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel, and “cross-border” work involving Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, with the Gaza Strip often excluded from peacebuilding frameworks.<sup>6</sup> Profound differences exist, of course, between the status and struggles of the Arab minority in Israel and Palestinians in the territories – as indeed between conditions in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. At the same time, international peacebuilding instruments fund organisations active in both spheres, and initiatives in both spheres employ similar methodological repertoires and share membership in the peacebuilding field’s umbrella organisations. Most important, Palestinians in the territories and Arab citizens of Israel are all part of the larger Palestinian Arab culture and people, and their relations with Israel and Israeli Jews, while distinct, are inextricably intertwined (Rabinowitz, 2004).<sup>7</sup> Chart 1 details the breakdown of initiatives in the field in terms of target populations.

Finally, it is important to note the disparities of capacity and resources between peacebuilding initiatives – the spectrum ranges from globally connected organisations annually raising several million dollars and implementing dozens of projects, to informal collectives of a handful of activists leading spontaneous grassroots campaigns – and much in between.

6. Approximately 3m Palestinians live within East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and approximately 1.8m live within the Gaza Strip. Population estimates from the Israeli and Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics.

7. A third “sphere,” of engagement by Jewish and Palestinian diaspora groups and international civil society, is a crucial component as well – but outside the purview of the current research. Therefore, initiatives which work exclusively or primarily with diaspora or international populations are not included in the data referenced here.

Chart 1. Target populations of peacebuilding initiatives by identity/citizenship/residency

Identity/Citizenship of Participants	Number of Active Initiatives	Percentage of Active Initiatives
Cross-Border (Palestinians and Israeli Jews)	68	41.46%
Shared Society (Arab and Jewish citizens of Israel)	61	37.20%
Jerusalem (Palestinian Jerusalemites and Israeli Jews)	19	11.59%
Primarily <i>internal</i> Israeli/Jewish	14	8.54%
Primarily <i>internal</i> (territories) Palestinian <sup>8</sup>	3	1.83%

From the sample of 83 organisations for whom verifiable budget figures could be obtained through US or Israeli tax documents, annual revenues range from tens of thousands of US dollars to approximately six million. Revenues exceeded one million USD for approximately one quarter of NGOs in the field; just under 40 per cent exceeded one million Israeli shekels (approximately 271,000 USD<sup>9</sup>). Shared Society and Cross-Border CSOs had relatively equal representation among the larger organisations. All human rights NGOs on the list reported annual revenues of at least 800,000 USD; 7 of 8 exceeded one million dollars of revenue, indicating fundraising success and relatively even distribution of funding within the human rights sub-field. Chart 2 provides an overview of the distribution of annual revenues.

The organisational field is likewise diverse in terms of longevity. As Chart 3 details, a new wave of several dozen NGOs has been established in each of the last three decades, complementing a cadre of veteran initiatives founded in the “formative years” of the field.

Chart 2. Annual revenue in most recent declared budget (FY 2013-2015)

Annual Revenue <sup>10</sup>	Cross-Border/ (EJ & WB)	Shared Society/ Israel	Civil/ Human Rights	Total Initiatives (% of 164)
\$3-6 million USD	6	4	4	14 (8.54%)
\$1-2 million USD	12	10	3	25 (15.24%)
NIS 1-3 million (\$300K-900K)	10	11	1	22 (13.41%)
<NIS 1 million	11	11	0	22 (13.41%)
Precise Figures n/a	44	37	0	81 (49.39%)

8. A larger number of Palestinian “internal dialogue” initiatives exist on the ground; the few that are included here also include some explicit aspect of engagement with Israelis and/or cross-conflict peacebuilding.

9. According to the average of conversion rates for FY 2013-2015, 1 USD = NIS 3.69.

10. Revenues determined according to the most recent public auditing statement between FY 2013-2015 – using a United States IRS form 990 or the financial report published by Israel’s nonprofit registry (rasham ha-amutot); in some cases of international organisations with local programmes, staff were consulted and/or the organisation’s annual report was used to determine percentages of total revenue directed to Israeli-Palestinian programmes.

Chart 3. Origin of Currently Active Peacebuilding Initiatives, by Decade

Decade	Active Initiatives Founded	Percentage of Current Field
2010-2016	47	28.7%
2000-2009	57	34.8%
1990-1999	39	23.8%
1980-1989	13	7.9%
1963-1979	8	4.9%
Total	164	100%

### 1.2 Diverse repertoire, limited reach

The field is equally – and increasingly – eclectic in terms of methodology. Chart 4 provides an operational categorisation of the contemporary field, detailing the methods/strategies employed by currently active initiatives. It is important to note that numerous organisations are multi-dimensional: they implement numerous projects simultaneously, employ diverse methods and address multiple issues and populations – hence the total number of strategies employed exceeds the total of 164 active initiatives.

Chart 4. Methods / strategies employed by active peacebuilding initiatives

Methods Employed	Active Initiatives	Percentage of Field
1. Advocacy	67	40.85%
2. Dialogue	61	37.20%
3. Civil/Human Rights <sup>11</sup>	38	23.17%
4. Education	38	23.17%
5. Arts/Culture	31	18.90%
6. Research	30	18.29%
7. Protest	27	16.46%
8. Hub (Meeting/Activity Site)	26	15.85%
9. Track Two Diplomacy	18	10.98%
10. Music	17	10.37%
11. Economic Development	15	9.15%
12. Media	14	8.54%
13. Sport	14	8.54%
14. Hi-Tech/IT	9	5.49%
15. Health/Medicine	6	3.66%
16. Environment	2	1.22%

11. This number includes initiatives whose work is not primarily civil/human rights but includes meaningful aspects. The overall list also includes at least eight organisations defined specifically as civil or human rights.

More organisations currently employ classic civil society peacebuilding approaches – advocacy, dialogue, education or arts and culture – than the emerging practical strategies of integrating peacebuilding content into practical fields such as economic development, environmental protection, health or technology.

**Practical cooperation projects – for example, projects designed to increase Palestinian IT capacity carry unique potential for social and economic impact.**

At the same time, practical cooperation projects – for example, projects designed to increase Palestinian IT capacity and integration of Arab citizens into Israel’s renowned technology sector – often involve greater financial investment and carry unique potential for social and economic impact.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, the least common approaches – environment, health and technology – are

employed by CSOs located at the higher end of the scale in terms of budget, capacity, and scope of work implemented.

The environmental initiatives – EcoPeace and the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies (AIES) – are dynamic, multi-dimensional “peacebuilding platforms,” simultaneously engaged in diverse transboundary projects involving Israelis, Palestinians, and Jordanians as well as regional and international parties (Lederach, 2005).

A similar distinction between established and emerging approaches is visible in terms of the issues and populations addressed by peacebuilding initiatives. As Chart 5 details, the predominant issue categories are anti-racism and pro-two state solution advocacy – the foundational issues for the field. As detailed below, the first waves of peacebuilding activity were fueled by opposition to the rise of the racist Kahane movement in Israel, in response to the outbreak of the First Intifada in the West Bank and Gaza, and support for a two-state solution inspired by breakthroughs in the peace process.

*Chart 5. Target issues/demographics for peacebuilding initiatives*

Target issues/populations	Active initiatives	Percentage of field
1. Youth	50	30.49%
2. Protest against Israeli rule in the West Bank	43	26.22%
3. Anti-Racism	33	20.12%
4. Two-State Advocacy	28	17.07%
5. Religious/Interfaith	23	14.02%
6. Women	20	12.20%
7. Jerusalem	19	11.59%
8. Internal/Uni-National Dialogue	17	10.37%
9. Security	10	6.10%
10. Nonviolence	6	3.66%

In terms of target populations, youth have long been the primary focus of leading approaches, e.g. dialogue, education, arts/culture and sport. Working with youth remains crucial today, given the prevalence of youth in the Palestinian population, and opinion research indicating that youth are the

12. Practical approaches are also more likely to be implemented on a project basis, by organisations that are not peacebuilding CSOs per se. Fields of practical cross-border projects have included agriculture, emergency management and disaster response, pest control and others – without involving a specific “peace organisation”.

least supportive demographic for peace efforts in both societies (Braunold & Saltan, 2016).

At the same time, there is a clear need for diversity, in terms of age, gender, and identity. The mobilising power of gendered approaches is illustrated by the WWP and Action 1325 initiatives mentioned above. The “religious/interfaith” and “internal dialogue” categories represent increasing emphasis on engaging conservative constituencies outside the secular, educated elite demographic classically synonymous with the “peace camp” (Lazarus, 2016). Interventions focused on assuring security in a potential peace framework have taken on increasing significance in the wake of the seizure of territories from which the IDF forces withdrew by Hamas and Hezbollah, and the disintegration of regional order (Koplow, 2016). Yuval Rahamim, recently appointed director of the Peace NGOs Forum in Israel, has advocated a new strategic orientation for the peacebuilding community focused on these two issues – building broad support within Israeli society and effectively addressing security concerns (Rahamim, 2016).

Episodes of racism in Israel have motivated moderate religious and centre-right figures, not associated with the “peace camp” demographic, to become outspoken advocates of dialogue, humanisation of the other and liberal democracy.

The above figures present a detailed snapshot of the contemporary civil society peacebuilding field. Part 2 will examine four case studies of effective peacebuilding work, even in today’s intractable conditions.

## Part 2: The state of peacebuilding today: four case studies

The following four case studies – (i) projects to foster anti-racism and religious dialogue, (ii) education for shared living, (iii) policy work to secure civic equality and a “shared society” between the Arab minority and the Jewish majority in Israel, (iv) and a new approach to water politics between Israel, the Palestinian Authority and Jordan – exemplify the potential of civil society peacebuilding for growth and policy impact, even in current conditions.

### 2.1 Peacebuilding in 2016: eclectic, embattled, resilient

The October 2016 Women’s “March of Hope” arrived on the heels of a busy summer of civil society peacebuilding. July 2016 alone witnessed a “Freedom March” of 800 Israelis and Palestinians to an Israeli army checkpoint in the West Bank; Palestinian and Israeli youth delegations attending multiple dialogue programmes in the country and outside; a trend of interfaith *iftar* meals and “Ramadan Nights” in which Jews were invited to Arab cities in Israel; Israeli activists delivering water to Palestinian towns cut off by Israel’s national water company; informational tours of the Separation Barrier and Palestinian East Jerusalem for Israelis and Diaspora Jews; Knesset sessions featuring NGO advocacy on anti-discrimination and peace process issues; bi-national backgammon tournaments in East and West Jerusalem; a documentary film screening on the Separation Barrier; the Israeli Peace NGO Forum meeting in Ramallah with the PLO Committee on Interaction with Israeli Society; outdoor, public Israeli-Palestinian dialogue and negotiation sessions in Tel Aviv, among numerous other events.

The Hand-in-Hand countrywide network of integrated, bilingual schools has doubled in size in the last three years, with 1,564 students now enrolled at six regional campuses, and 600 applicants on waiting lists.

*These peacebuilding projects present an alternative ethos to acrimony, ethnocentrism and inertia, as illustrated by the following examples.*

#### Case study 1: Anti-racism and religious dialogue

Episodes of racism in Israel have motivated moderate religious and centre-right figures, not associated with the “peace camp” demographic, to become outspoken advocates of dialogue, humanisation of the other and liberal democracy – commonly labeled “Leftist” values in Israel today.

The rise of the extremism within Israel has correlated with growing interest, among certain sectors of the Israeli population, in the “touchpoints” of cross-cultural shared space established over the years by civil society organisations (CSOs). Racism and violence – particularly hate crimes targeting Palestinians and Israeli peace activists – have generated many examples of counter-mobilisation:

- Israeli and international activists now organise annually to join Palestinian farmers for the West Bank olive harvest, to oppose violent harassment by militant “hilltop youth” settlers.



First grade students at Max Rayne Hand-in-Hand School, Jerusalem. Photograph used by permission of Hand-in-Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education.

**“The ideal framework for creating shared living between different sectors is joint schools, such as the bilingual Jewish Arab schools.”**  
– *State Comptroller Yoseph Shapira*

- The right wing Jewish “Price Tag” campaign of vandalism and violence generated the inter-religious, anti-racist “Light Tag” movement and the Coalition Against Racism in Israel.
- In Jerusalem, CSOs and grassroots groups have partnered to prevent the disruption of Christian holy sites, encourage interfaith dialogue on Mount Zion, and remove racist graffiti defacing Arabic language on public

signs (Shultziner, 2016). This last example is one of 10 new initiatives of the “Jerusalem Tolerance Forum,” recently awarded NIS 200,000 to expand their work by the Jerusalem municipality (Biton, 2016).

- Sustained dialogue between faith leaders, led by Rabbi Michael Melchior’s Mosaica organisation among others, has played a role in decreasing tension with respect to Jerusalem’s holy sites (Maltz, 2016).
- Rabbinical leaders engaged in the *Siakh Shalom* (Talking Peace) initiative released public statements recognising the authority of the Islamic Waqf administration on the Haram A-Sharif/ Temple Mount (Hirschfeld, 2016).

**“Children who do not speak Hebrew and Arabic cannot talk to one another and understand each other... We must not give up on education for partnership.”**  
– *Israeli President Reuven Rivlin*

A prominent example of such activism in modern Orthodox religious circles is Rabbi Binyamin Lau, a nephew of Israel’s former Chief Rabbi raised in the B’nei Akiva religious Zionist youth movement and educated in the Gush Etzion yeshiva

in the West Bank. While maintaining his position as a congregational rabbi in Jerusalem, Lau has emerged in recent years as a mainstay of the “Light Tag” movement and an outspoken opponent of racism and religious extremism (Kamin, 2013). In the ultra-Orthodox sector, Adina Bar-Shalom – founder of the Haredi College and daughter of the late former Chief Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the Shas party – is renowned for her advocacy of higher education for women and greater integration of her community into the Israeli economy and society. Less well known, but no less remarkable, have been her integration of conflict resolution and dialogue courses into the college curriculum, and her public advocacy for peace and the humanisation of the Palestinians - in tacit contradiction of some of her late father’s remarks (Miller, 2016).

On the secular Right, a host of former Likud stalwarts have publicly denounced the tide of racism in their party. Israel’s President Reuven (“Ruvi”) Rivlin is most prominent among these territorial maximalists who champion civic equality, the rule of law, and respectful dialogue between Israel’s “tribes” – a thoroughly liberal-democratic, multi-cultural paradigm (Hecht, 2016). Rivlin’s outspoken advocacy, including his public visits to Arab victims of attacks and his social media condemnations of racism, have turned him into a target of the trolls – yet he is apparently undaunted (Lior, 2015).

### Case study 2: Education for shared living

In November 2014 an arson attack took place at the Max Rayne Hand-in-Hand school, Jerusalem’s only integrated, bilingual K-12 campus. Extremists set fire to a first-grade classroom and sprayed racist slogans. Yet rather than stigmatise the school, the attack generated an unprecedented outpouring of mainstream support for integrated education, including visits from ministers, members of Knesset, US Ambassador Dan Shapiro, and President Rivlin (twice), all providing official legitimacy for a previously controversial educational model (Lazarus, 2015, B).

In the aftermath, the Hand-in-Hand (HiH) countrywide network of integrated, bilingual schools has doubled in size in the last three years, with 1,564 students now enrolled at six regional campuses, and 600 applicants on waiting lists. After uneven growth in its first fifteen years of operation, Hand-in-Hand suddenly cannot keep up with demand; the organisation has now received requests to establish programmes at eight additional locations (Bardach, 2016).<sup>13</sup> All HiH campuses have now received official endorsement and requisite funding from local authorities and the Ministry of Education – after years of struggle, in certain cases (Steinberg, 2014). A recent special report by Israel’s State Comptroller Yosef Shapira on “Education for Shared Living and the Prevention of Racism,” claims that “the ideal framework for creating shared living between different sectors is joint schools, such as the bilingual Jewish Arab schools” (The State Comptroller and Ombudsman of Israel, 2016, p. 80).

In the same period, a pair of Arab-Jewish civil society initiatives have successfully implemented a more modest strategy for educational integration by placing hundreds of Arab teachers in mainstream Jewish schools. These programmes, piloted by The Abraham Fund Initiatives and Merchavim CSOs, have been adopted by the Ministry of Education at district levels, “scaling” up their models in a manner all too rarely achieved by Arab-Jewish interventions (Maor, 2016). In a presidential address, Rivlin reiterated his support for integrated education, stating that, “We cannot continue to perpetuate the status quo, and raise our children in the darkness of mutual ignorance, with suspicion and alienation. Children who do not speak Hebrew and Arabic, and cannot talk to one another and understand each other ... We must not give up on education for partnership.”<sup>14</sup>

13. There are at least four other integrated bilingual schools in the country – the Hagar K-6 school in Be’er Sheva, the Neve Shalom/Wahat Al-Salam K-6 outside Jerusalem, the YMCA kindergarten in Jerusalem and the Ein Bustan kindergarten in the Galilee.

14. President Rivlin, “A shared Israeli hope: Vision or dream?”, 14 June 2016, The President’s Website. [http://www.president.gov.il/English/Presidential\\_Activities/Press\\_Releases/Pages/news\\_140616\\_05.aspx](http://www.president.gov.il/English/Presidential_Activities/Press_Releases/Pages/news_140616_05.aspx)



*First grade classroom after arson attack at Max Rayne Hand in Hand School in Jerusalem, July 2014. Photograph used by permission of Hand-in-Hand Center for Jewish-Arab Education.*

This encouragement of integrated education has been accompanied by a burgeoning emphasis, in official policy and rhetoric, on the economic integration of Arab citizens as an Israeli national interest – a cardinal principle of Arab-Jewish “shared society” advocacy in Israel. President Rivlin encapsulated this idea in his seminal 2015 speech at the Herzliya Conference, asserting that:

From an economic viewpoint, the current reality is not viable. The math is simple, any child can see it. If we do not reduce current gaps in the work force participation and salary levels of the Arab and Haredi populations... Israel will not continue to be a developed economy” (Rivlin, 2015).

Multiple CSOs have long been active promoting economic development among Arab citizens in Israel. Successful models include The Abraham Fund Initiatives’ *Sharikat Haya* project designed to increase Arab women’s workforce participation, and a bevy of CSOs and private sector initiatives aimed at integrating Arab citizens into Israel’s globally renowned hi-tech sector (Flacks, 2015), paralleled by “cross-border” initiatives aimed at accelerating development of the Palestinian tech sector in the territories (The Marker, 2012) and combining tech training and youth dialogue (Economist, 2014). These initiatives have led to highly significant investments in diversifying the tech sector and removing barriers to opportunity for Palestinians on both sides of the Green Line. Civil society’s most powerful contemporary impacts in the economic sphere, however, may have come recently at the policy level.

“Whether you’re Israeli or Palestinian, you should have the same access to the same amount of water”.  
– Israeli Energy Minister Yuval Steinitz, speaking at EcoPeace’s annual conference in Jordan

## 2.2 Achieving policy change: Sikkuy and Eco-Peace

### Case study 3: Creating a shared society: Sikkuy

The long-term impact of civil society advocacy is perhaps most visible in the Israeli government's historic "Decision 922" – a revolutionary overhaul of the State budgeting procedure designed to equalise, year on year, resource allocation to the Arab sector, including investments of more than 15bn shekels toward infrastructure and economic development in the Arab sector (Prime Minister's Office, 2015).

Decision 922 was adopted on December 30, 2015, against the vehement opposition of some government ministers. The breakthrough was made possible by years of civil society work – advocacy, coalition building, programme development, research, and lobbying. Among the primary trailblazers was *Sikkuy: The Association for the Advancement of Civic Equality in Israel* – a fully integrated Arab-Jewish NGO dedicated to achieving "full equality on all levels between the Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel." In concert with the civil society and political leaders of Israel's Palestinian citizens, Sikkuy worked tirelessly to build the substance and the political support for Decision 922, which co-director Ron Gerlitz describes as "a significant change in the whole relationship of the government and the Arab citizens, a very big opportunity to change realities" (Inter-Agency Task Force on Israeli Arab Issues, 2016).



*Seven Hour Swim to Save a Dying Sea: In November 2016, EcoPeace brought athletes from around the region and the world to swim 15 kilometers through the world's briniest water, from Jordan to Israel. The event aimed to publicise the plight of the Dead Sea, whose waters are rapidly receding due to excessive mineral mining and climate change. Photograph used by permission of EcoPeace / Stuart Thomson.*

Sikkuy has built relationships over the long-term by convening regular roundtable meetings with key advisors in the Ministry of Finance and the Prime Minister's Office, under the auspices of an internationally-funded project entitled "Seat at the Table." Key elements of Decision 922 were taken straight from Sikkuy policy papers developed during those years. According to Gerlitz, the organisation was able to leverage the trust built over years of work, "to substantially improve the plan and to contribute to the dynamics of agreement between the Arab citizens' political leadership and the Ministry of Finance" (Gerlitz, 2016). Their work testifies to the potential for strategic, sustained civil society campaigns to effect positive change at the highest level even in present political circumstances.