

June 8, 2020

Dear Members of the House and Senate Appropriations Subcommittees on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs,

We, the 72 undersigned organizations, write to urge robust support to foreign assistance, including assistance focused on preventing and mitigating conflict, in a new COVID-19 supplemental funding package. While we appreciate the \$2.37 billion appropriated thus far for foreign assistance, it is insufficient to meet the current needs of the COVID-19 pandemic response, and is only a sixth of what leading experts estimate Congress should appropriate. This crisis is not only a public health emergency but is also decimating economies and exacerbating conflict dynamics in its wake. While current domestic needs remain substantial, the U.S. must continue to be a global leader in foreign assistance to contain a pandemic that knows no borders.

The pandemic is more than just a health crisis - it is stabilization in reverse. Fragility and violent conflict were on the rise prior to the pandemic, and this crisis is increasing conflict dynamics in these already destabilized regions. Already, violence is increasing and peace processes are under threat. Additionally, repressive governments are exploiting the crisis to further restrict civil society space and democratic institutions – which in turn is exacerbating conflict dynamics and creating grievances that are increasing levels of violence and conflict, with a particularly devastating impact on already marginalized communities.

Congress must provide much needed emergency assistance for conflict-affected and fragile states to assist in the effective prevention and mitigation of the pandemic in this funding package. It is critical to mobilize new assistance now rather than wait for future packages, as the needs are urgent and conflict prevention must be at the heart of the pandemic response strategy rather than solely a second order issue. All around the world, peacebuilders are quickly adapting with bold initiatives to address the health, social, and political impacts of COVID-19 in their communities and countries. Peacebuilders are ensuring conflict sensitive distribution of aid and healthcare, adapting their approaches for online engagement, applying lessons learned from previous epidemics such as Ebola, and developing new ways to distribute reliable information. Peacebuilders are collaborating across sectors to catalyze positive change and address inefficiencies and inequalities. These efforts are crucial in alleviating grievances, preventing violence and building peace, and supporting an effective response to COVID-19 in conflict-affected countries.

To prevent violence, reduce conflict dynamics accelerated by the pandemic, and support the peacebuilding and conflict prevention work that remains essential despite the pandemic, the following State and Foreign Operations accounts are critical:

- *The Complex Crises Fund (CCF) enables USAID to prevent and respond to unforeseen crises and conflicts. It is the only account of its kind, filling immediate, short-term gaps*

*during emergent crises. CCF is in high demand and has directly supported initiatives to prevent mass atrocities and violent conflict.*

- *The Atrocities Prevention Fund enables the Department of State to prevent atrocities, including by implementing recommendations of the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force. This account is particularly critical as we have seen the rising levels of atrocity early warning signs increase as social cohesion fractures and minority groups are treated as scapegoats during this pandemic.*
- *Transition Initiatives funds the Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) at USAID. OTI's partnership mechanism is unique at USAID and allows it to seize emerging windows of opportunity to promote stability by catalyzing local initiatives through adaptive and agile programming. OTI works in fragile and conflict-affected contexts to kickstart peacebuilding, reconciliation and democratic reforms which lay the groundwork for long-term development.*
- *The Human Rights and Democracy Fund functions as a "venture capital fund" for democracy and human rights, enabling the State Department to respond quickly and flexibly to changing needs and opportunities to advance democracy and promote human rights.*
- *The Prevention and Stabilization Fund supports the stabilization of conflict-affected areas and mitigation of fragility by the Department of State and USAID, including through the Global Fragility Strategy, as mandated in the Global Fragility Act (P.L. 116-94). No less than three-quarters of this fund should be dedicated to programs in support of the Global Fragility Strategy.*

Again, we urge Congress to include robust foreign assistance funding to prevent and contain the global pandemic and to specifically support conflict prevention and peacebuilding accounts that are critical to preventing and reducing violence and violent conflict which is accelerating due to the pandemic. The organizations that support this letter are available to answer questions or concerns and to share additional information from peacebuilders on the frontlines.

Thank you for your time and dedicated service.

Sincerely,

Alliance for Middle East Peace

Alliance for Peacebuilding

American Friends Service Committee

American Jewish World Service

The Auschwitz Institute for the Prevention of Genocide and Mass Atrocities

Beyond Conflict  
The Borgen Project  
The Bridgeway Group  
The Carter Center  
CDA Collaborative Learning  
Center for Civil Society and Democracy for Syria  
Center for Civilians in Conflict  
Center for International Policy  
Center for Policy Analysis for Horn of Africa  
Charity & Security Network  
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy Clearinghouse on Women's Issues  
Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach  
Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces Counterpart  
International  
Cure Violence Global  
Darfur Women Action Group  
DT Global  
The Educators' Institute for Human Rights  
Equal Access International  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Faiths for Safe Water  
FHI 360  
Food for the Hungry  
Freedom House  
Friends Committee on National Legislation  
Generations For Peace  
Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect  
Global Peace Foundation  
International Alert  
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)  
Invisible Children  
Jewish World Watch  
Karuna Center for Peacebuilding  
Leadership Conference of Women Religious  
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns  
Mercy Corps  
Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies  
Movilizadorio  
NAFSA: Association of International Educators  
National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd  
Never Again Coalition  
Nonviolent Peaceforce

Oasis Network for Community Transformation  
One Earth Future  
Outward Bound Center for Peacebuilding  
Pact  
Parallel Networks  
PartnersGlobal  
Pax Christi USA  
Peace Catalyst International  
Peace Direct  
Peace Initiative Network  
Plan International USA  
Program for the Advancement of Research on Conflict and Collaboration, Syracuse University  
    Maxwell School  
RAHO-SOMALIA  
Saferworld  
Search for Common Ground  
Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding  
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries  
United Nations Association of the National Capital Area  
Women In International Security (WIIS)  
Women for Afghan Women  
Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security and Conflict Transformation  
Women's Action for New Directions  
World Renew  
Young-Adult Empowerment Initiative