



# Prioritizing Peace

Congressional recommendations  
for a more ethical and effective  
U.S. foreign policy

Many of the greatest security challenges facing the United States in the 21st century demand non-military solutions. These challenges include climate change; pandemic disease; rising authoritarianism; extreme inequality; corruption; and religious, ethnic and gender exclusion and persecution. These factors have led to rising violence and instability that only compound underlying injustices. Meanwhile, the State Department and USAID are facing these mounting crises without the resources to fully address them.

To overcome these challenges, U.S. foreign policy needs a major reorientation. The Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL) offers members of Congress the following recommendations to begin to put peace at the core of U.S. foreign policy.

## Make peacebuilding a priority

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*Establish peacebuilding as a central goal of U.S. foreign policy.*

- » Pass the Department of State Authorization Act annually as *must-pass legislation* to ensure that our diplomats and development professionals have the resources, tools, and authorities they need to address today's prevailing issues.
- » Charge the Secretary of State and the Administrator of USAID with responsibility to co-lead and advance U.S. global peacebuilding efforts, with support from the Undersecretary for Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human Rights and the Assistant to the Administrator for the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Stabilization.
- » Strengthen oversight and implementation of legislation to prevent conflict and protect civilians—such as the Global Fragility Act (P.L. 116-94); the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocity Prevention Act (P.L. 115-441); and the Women, Peace, and Security Act (P.L. 115-68)—by conducting regular public hearings and holding officials accountable for their actions and omissions.



## Do no harm

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*Ensure that arms sales and security assistance do not escalate current conflicts, that military operations comply with relevant international law, and that U.S. policy does not undermine peacebuilding efforts or exacerbate human suffering.*

- » Pass the bipartisan National Security Powers Act (S. 2391)/National Security Reforms and Accountability Act (H.R. 5410) to increase congressional oversight of major national security decisions, including military interventions, arms exports, and national emergency declarations. By asserting its constitutional powers, Congress can reduce the likelihood of unauthorized actions that escalate violence and endanger civilian lives.
- » Conduct greater oversight of, and increase transparency for, operations that have the potential to result in civilian harm. Such efforts should include holding public hearings on strikes and operations that have reportedly caused high levels of civilian harm, as well as on Department of Defense civilian casualty policy, generally. They should also encompass conducting or commissioning an investigation into civilian harm resulting from the last two decades of U.S. counterterrorism operations and the effectiveness of U.S. policies for minimizing civilian harm. All findings, conclusions, and recommendations should be publicly released.
- » Review and lift broad economic sanction regimes, as they cause significant civilian harm and often fail to achieve their foreign policy objectives. Such sanctions regimes impede critical humanitarian work and have inhibited the ability of targeted countries to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Strengthen the voice of peacebuilding and human rights in the U.S. foreign policy architecture

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*Increase the power and authority of offices and bureaus that focus on promoting human rights, peacebuilding, and justice.*

- » Provide the State Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor a veto over all arms transfers and security assistance. Pass the SAFEGUARD Act of 2021 (H.R. 5629/S. 1473) to prevent exported U.S. defense articles and services from being used in violation of international humanitarian law or internationally recognized human rights.
- » Support robust appropriations for bureaus and offices within the State Department and USAID that inform policy and conduct programs on conflict prevention, peacebuilding, refugees, and migration. Such bureaus and offices include, but are not limited to, the State Department's Bureau of Conflict Stabilization Operations (CSO); Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL); the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration; and the Office of Global Criminal Justice; and USAID's Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization and Center for Democracy, Human Rights, and Governance.



## Increase staff diversity and capacity to build peace

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*Align hiring, training, retention, and promotion policies to attain a more inclusive and diverse workforce with greater peacebuilding expertise.*

- » Pass the Represent America Abroad Act of 2021 (H.R. 1096) and the Diversity and Inclusion at the Department of State Act (H.R. 4589) to improve the State Department's policies and practices relating to recruitment, retention, and promotion in order to advance diversity, equity, and inclusion. To effectively address economic, gender, and racial inequality around the world, the United States must recognize that the composition of personnel and leadership are inseparable from policy decision making and, therefore, must redress the historic and ongoing inequities within the U.S. Foreign Service.
- » Designate specific funding for both the State Department and USAID to conduct atrocities prevention training as mandated in the Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act (P.L. 115-441). Related trainings on conducting gender analysis and on conflict prevention and peacebuilding approaches are also essential for diplomats and development professionals to meet today's challenges.

## Position peace at the center of U.S. foreign assistance

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*Apply a conflict sensitive lens to all humanitarian and development assistance and increase support to local peacebuilding efforts.*

- » Mandate that all USAID country development strategies and all economic and security assistance be informed by rigorous and up-to-date conflict analyses to maximize success and reduce unintended negative impacts.
- » Support robust funding for peacebuilding, atrocity prevention, and migration services through the following appropriations accounts: the Complex Crises Fund; the Democracy Fund and the Human Rights and Democracy Fund; Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance; International Disaster Assistance; Migration and Refugee Assistance; the Multi-Donor Global Fragility Fund; the Prevention and Stabilization Fund; Reconciliation Programs; Transition Initiatives; and the U.S. Institute of Peace.
- » Significantly increase investment in the Atrocities Prevention Fund to respond to the increased risk of mass atrocities resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic. The fund enables the State Department to implement recommendations of the Atrocity Early Warning Task Force and support efforts to prevent mass atrocities and genocide.
- » Double the Complex Crises Fund (CCF), which enables USAID to prevent and respond to early warning signs of mass violence and escalating conflicts. It is the only account of its kind, filling immediate, short-term gaps during emergent crises, and its resources are consistently in high demand. However, CCF levels have remained stagnant since FY16, despite increasing violence and instability exacerbated by climate change and COVID-19.



## Reaffirm the U.S. commitment to multilateralism

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*Rejoin multilateral organizations, pay U.S. dues in full, engage in multilateral diplomacy, and ratify and abide by international treaties.*

- » Pass the U.S. Commitment to Peacekeeping Act (H.R. 4420) to repeal the 25% cap on U.S. contributions to UN peacekeeping operations, and appropriate funds to repay the over \$1 billion in U.S. peacekeeping arrears.
- » Fully fund the Contributions to International Organizations account—which covers U.S. dues to the regular UN budget, affiliated agencies, and other multilateral organizations—and support UN-led humanitarian appeals.
- » Support conventional arms control efforts by urging President Biden to immediately ban the U.S. military from developing, producing, using, or stockpiling antipersonnel landmines anywhere in the world and set the United States on track to accede to the 1997 Mine Ban Treaty and the 2013 Arms Trade Treaty by 2024.
- » Support diplomatic efforts to resolve conflicts and reduce global tensions, including by passing the Iran Diplomacy Act (S. 434) to encourage a return to full compliance with the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) and the Peace on the Korean Peninsula Act (H.R.3446) to support a formal end-of-war declaration to the Korean War. Encourage diplomatic engagement with Russia and China to prevent a renewed arms race and to support de-escalation of potential armed conflicts. Avoid rhetoric and policies that threaten violence, assume zero-sum outcomes, and promote harmful stereotyping.