

October Action:

Letters to the Editor on Peacebuilding in the Middle East – Call for Expanding Long-Term Solutions!

The US has embarked on another major round of armed conflict in the Middle East, bombing targets in Syria and Iraq steadily for the past several weeks. Let us bring focus, in this painful time of war, to those who continue planting practical seeds of peace in this realm – that we might somehow bring this bloody chapter to a speedier close, and possibly prevent the next round of such horrors. Our letters to the editor can help to bring this about, by placing more attention now on proven-effective methods for more peaceful resolution of conflicts even in apparently quite challenging circumstances.

Note: for those of you developing relationships with your Congress Members about the Youth PROMISE Act, we urge your teams to also seek out opportunities for in-person contact and influence during the October Congressional recess – when they may be home campaigning for themselves or their allies. This bill could go either way this session – your one conversation might be the difference!

Every paper has its own criteria regarding letter length and other considerations. For the structure, please use the “E.P.I.C.” format – illustrated below with some suggested content for each section.

Basic Steps

1. Identify local daily newspapers. Find list here: http://bit.ly/find_newspapers You will certainly be able to find an article you can respond to, regarding current warfare in the Middle East.
2. Look in the paper (online?) letters to the editor or editorial section to find submission criteria.
3. Read a few LTEs they have published to get an idea of how writers begin them.
4. Review the list of peacebuilding examples on the back of this sheet, and/or research some others, and/or draw upon programs or approaches with which you are already familiar.
5. Write and submit your letter, using their criteria and the E.P.I.C. format below.
6. The more letters sent in by your team, the more likely at least one of them will be published.
Please be sure to write unique letters. Read them aloud to each other for inspiration!!

And remember to focus a little on the “tunnel,” and a lot more on the “light”

The “E.P.I.C.” Format

Engage:

To the Editors:

Reference an article about the current conflict, and your emotional reaction to it – perhaps dismay, grief, despair, sadness, or anger.

Problem:

What are the thoughts you have connected with the above feeling? Perhaps something about how we seem to be trapped in a cycle of stamping out some enemies and creating new ones, and this seems particularly true for us recently regarding Islamic peoples. You might refer to some fact stated in the article you referenced above, or a related element in your awareness, which particularly bothers you about this situation. This is your sense of what is “wrong.”

Inform About Solution(s):

Even while this conflict rages, we can look to those who have been working and continue to work –to break these cycles of violence. Please state in your own words, from your heart, why this is important. See below for some examples of proven peacebuilding approaches.

Call to Action:

The tools exist, the skills exist, let's recognize, expand and make use of them.

Call for the US Government to follow Britain's lead, where the government committed to an expanded billion pound budget for international peacebuilding (to take effect in April 2015) through its new "Conflict, Stability, and Security Fund."¹ Let us recognize that peaceful ways forward are possible, and **call on our government to make this shift a long-term high priority through creation of a Cabinet-level US Department of Peacebuilding. Such a Department would research, articulate, promote, and provide leading examples of powerful peacebuilding methods – such as those named below. Let us also call for greater funding for current successful infrastructure elements like the U.S. Institute of Peace, and the State Department's Conflict Stabilizations Operation Bureau and Complex Crises Fund.**²

Signing Off

Under your signature mention that you are a member of The Peace Alliance locally.

Examples of Powerful International Peacebuilding – Let's Do More of This!

The Salam Institute - has demonstrated extensive success in facilitating interfaith and intercultural dialogue, peacebuilding, sustainable development, conflict resolution and community development both in Muslim countries, and between Muslim and non-Muslim religious and secular leaders. Salam Institute staff has conducted trainings in regions as diverse as Israel, West Bank and Gaza, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Mindanao Philippines, Africa and Balkans, among others.³

Conciliation Resources – CR is a peacebuilding NGO supporting people at the heart of conflicts who are striving to find solutions. They work to deepen our collective understanding of the conflict, bring together divided communities and create opportunities for them to resolve their differences peacefully. CR remains as long as needed to provide advice, support and practical resources. CR then takes what they learn to government decision-makers, and others working to end conflict, to improve peacebuilding policies and practice worldwide.⁴

SaferWorld - works with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. They then work to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. SW is a not-for-profit organization with programs in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.⁵

In the US there are now 227 college and graduate level degree programs in Peace and Conflict Studies – this signifies a generation of budding experts, ready to join this growing peacebuilding economy.⁶

**All that is lacking is public awareness and political will. And that's where we come in.
*Have Fun, Write Well, and Build Peace!***

¹ http://www.c-r.org/sites/default/files/Joint%20SW_CR_IA%20briefing%20on%20CP%20CSSF%20BSOS%20-%20FINAL0914.pdf

² please see <http://peacealliance.org/issues-advocacy/international-peacekeeping/>

³ <http://salaminstitute.org/new/>

⁴ <http://www.c-r.org/>

⁵ <http://www.saferworld.org.uk/index.php>