



Organization's Profile and Purpose

Established in 1990 and reactivated in 2011, **Middle East Peace Network (MEPN)** is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit, non-governmental organization (NGO) that uses private diplomacy to complement the activities of governments in their pursuit of peace and conflict resolution. Unlike other international private diplomacy NGOs, **MEPN's** single geographic orientation is the Middle East with a special focus on the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Recognizing the magnitude, complexity, and gravity of this conflict and the evidenced limitations of traditional diplomacy (Track One), **MEPN** aims to enhance the Middle East peace process by adding a non-governmental peacebuilding component (Track Two) to the peace efforts. It argues that in this warring region, both tracks—“*peace from above*” (Track One) and “*peace from below*” (Track Two)—are needed in order for peace negotiations to succeed. For the Dove of Peace to fly out of its political “cage” and soar high in the Middle East skies, both wings—the official diplomats and the private diplomats—must act together.

MEPN takes a nonpartisan, neutral, and impartial position in its relation to the conflicting parties. It has no political platform, ideology, or agenda, nor is it committed to any specific policy or set of policies on Middle East affairs. As such, it takes no formal position vis-à-vis the core issues underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Those issues remain to be resolved by official diplomats on the negotiating table. The ultimate objective of **MEPN** is to support and enhance the peace process by creating—through alternative avenues, such as private diplomacy initiatives, transnational mechanisms, and backchannels—a win-win environment that is conducive to settling the conflict.

MEPN is all about *peacebuilding*, which focuses on creating a long-term culture of peace, rather than solving existing conflicts or preventing old ones from re-occurring. *Peacebuilding* is an everyday activity that aims at building understanding and tolerance between individuals, communities, and societies and establishing new structures of interaction and cooperation. *Peacebuilding* is the construction of new environments and new cultures which, in the case of Arabs and Israelis, creates a fundamental and substantive change in their collective minds and hearts with regard to their age-old conflict—a broad, dramatic, and massive paradigm shift in both societies. Such a shift would create a sustainable “ecology of peace” that strengthens deficient governmental structures and capabilities with alternative non-governmental avenues that foster conciliatory interactions, open communications, and genuine opportunities for peace.

Specifically, **MEPN's** *peacebuilding* initiatives consist of a wide range of efforts associated with societal transformation, people-to-people relationship building, citizen diplomacy, advocacy work, empowerment, dialogue, reconciliation, and peacemaking. They include avenues that address the structural causes and the underlying substantive issues of the conflict, which are usually ignored by official diplomats. Together, they are all designed to assist the warring parties in transitioning from a prolonged, violent conflict into a durable peace. The **Israeli-Palestinian Peacebuilding Initiative (IPPI)** (see Exhibit 7) and the **Jewish-Muslim Reconciliation Initiative (JMRI)** (see Exhibit 8), include all of the above efforts.

Guided by a fundamental commitment to the noble cause of peace, MEPN adheres to the following core values:

- Peace is a continuous, active, and dynamic relationship among nations that needs to be nurtured and sustained.
- We are part of a common humanity that binds us all together as a single human family that cherishes and seeks peace.
- Human interaction transcends political, religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and international boundaries.
- Peacebuilding efforts are indispensable and necessary conditions for creating a climate for effective peace negotiations.
- Partnership, mutuality, and cooperation are essential ingredients for achieving an enduring peace.
- Ordinary citizens have the right and responsibility to participate in formulating and furthering a strategy for peace.

MEPN engages in the pursuit of a genuine peace, the kind of peace that enables nations to grow and offers its citizens the opportunity to build a better life for their children. Not an enforced peace, but peace by choice. Not just peace for one to the exclusion of others, but peace for all. Not being *against* war, but being *for* peace. Not a mere absence or cessation of war, but a virtue, a way of life, a way of thinking, a new paradigm that unlocks the resources, the talents, and the imagination of the people. In this paradigm, the way *to* peace is the way *of* peace. In this paradigm, conflict resolution is not merely a process that may be culminated at the end of the road by a peace settlement. It is rather a series of well-intentioned, well-designed peace actions and interactions undertaken along the road. Peace is a never-ending process, a work of many people carried on a hundred fronts. This is what MEPN is all about.