Swiss Actors in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict
Editorial

More than twenty years after the Oslo Accords and nearly a year after the failure of yet another round of negotiations, this time initiated by the US Secretary of State John Kerry in August 2013, the Israeli–Palestinian peace process remains at a complete standstill. Add to that the ever-alarming humanitarian situation at the Gaza Strip as a result of Operation Protective Edge and the extreme fragility of the reconciliation agreement signed by representatives of Hamas and Fatah in April 2014. During this difficult period, various Swiss actors have been active on the ground, attempting to diffuse tensions: diplomats have sought to facilitate negotiations, humanitarian aid workers have participated in the reconstruction of infrastructure and NGOs have launched numerous projects and initiatives to foster reconciliation.

What are the current determining factors in the resolution of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict? What is the role of both the international community and civil society in establishing a viable and sustainable peace? And what, in this context, are the strategies adopted by state and non-state actors from Switzerland? This edition highlights the importance of inter-Palestinian reconciliation in resolving the Israeli–Palestinian conflict. Also featured in this issue are several articles describing projects and initiatives currently under way in Switzerland and in the field, both by the administration and by NGOs. These articles provide an overview of the work of these actors while showing how it fits into a long-term conflict resolution strategy.

Marie Seidel
Editor

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International Actors and the Inter-Palestinian Reconciliation: Where is the Urgency?

Decisive issues for the future of the Palestinian national movement and the prospects for a two-state solution depend on the success of inter-Palestinian reconciliation. While the window of opportunity for this is slowly closing, international actors do not yet seem to act with the urgency required.

On 23rd of April 2014, Fatah and Hamas signed in Gaza’s Shati refugee camp the latest of a series of reconciliation agreements. Hopes were not particularly high, as a number of similar agreements had been signed in the past (Sana’a 2008, Mecca Agreement of 2008, Cairo Agreement of 2011, and Doha Declaration of 2012) but were incapable of overcoming the factional divide in practice. The Shati agreement had the potential to be different. The parties indeed proceeded to form a Government of National Consensus (GNC) and thus gave proof of significant political will.

The challenges awaiting resolution by a unified Palestinian polity are indeed massive: the re-creation of a unified national political agenda and strategy for national independence; the re-establishment of the legitimacy and unity of key political institutions; the forming of a framework allowing a new generation of leaders to emerge, to only name a few. Such decisive issues for the future of the Palestinian national movement will unlikely be tackled if the parties fail to address the more immediate problems that have emerged as a direct consequence of eight years of separation and factional hostility: i.e. the control of the border crossings, re-unification of public administration and work force; re-unification of the justice system; security sector reform; compensation of the several hundred victims; Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) reform, etc.

Sixteen months after the Shati agreement and the creation of the GNC, however, it is difficult to stay optimistic. The GNC has remained a shadow of a government, unable to even fulfil the lowest expectations Palestinians could have had from it. Politicians from both Fatah and Hamas prefer to continue trading accusations over who is responsible for the continued deadlock instead of creating a format and channels for discussing the pressing problems. The plight of the population in Gaza has only worsened over time in the light of a stalled reconstruction process, unpaid salaries of tens of thousands of public service employees, and the persistent blockade. The perception of the population in Gaza is that their situation is hardly a priority for their brothers and sisters in the West Bank. This is a poisonous seed for the future of a unified national agenda.

International actors traditionally play a disproportionally large role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. However, relatively little has been done by influential actors such as the European Union or the United States to create an enabling environment that fosters reconciliation. Sixteen months after the signing of the Shati agreement, the misguided and counterproductive no-contact policy towards Hamas is still in place. It is difficult to imagine how Palestinians can move towards the establishment of a real Government of National Unity and elections, if it is not clear that key international actors including the United Nations would accept such a change.

Also regarding direct support of a difficult reconciliation process, international actors have remained largely passive. There is a perception that most diplomatic actors – with the notable exceptions of Switzerland and the Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for the Middle East Peace Process (UNSCO) – were extremely reluctant to invest sufficient political capital in order to overcome the blockages between the two parties.

The picture looks somewhat different regarding the efforts of international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). There is a high level of on-going advocacy work targeting important factors conducive to reconciliation. For example lifting the...
Gaza blockade, increasing the accountability of the political leadership, strengthening the rule of law, or protecting the space for civil society action. However, more could have been done. While there would have been the opportunity to robustly incorporate reconciliation into on-going programmes, very few human rights, development, gender or democratisation programmes received an appropriate “reconciliation component”. This leaves reconciliation up until today under-researched and still largely neglected as a field of specific activity for INGOs and their Palestinian partner organisations and networks. The role of civil society is crucial given the current deadlock between the political parties. Furthermore, the factional split is not limited to the political realm, but affecting society at large. More space is therefore needed in Palestine for a broad-based discourse about what “social reconciliation” entails, what the expectations, contributions, and demands of the wider population are, etc. All of this calls for a proactive stance and an enhanced role of civil society organisations in this process.

The window of opportunity for Palestinian reconciliation is slowly closing. The effect of another failed reconciliation process will likely be quite drastic: it would not only cement the internal political and regional divisions, but create a dangerous political vacuum affecting the legitimacy of the Palestinian leadership as a whole. In such a case frustrations about continued division, occupation and dispossession could easily lead to larger-scale societal unrest and violence. The main responsibility for the current impasse clearly lies with the decision makers inside Fatah and Hamas as well as the presidency. However, more can and should be done by international actors as well.

swisspeace currently supports Palestinian organisations in Gaza and the West Bank in a process of mapping reconciliation-focused activities and capacities. Preliminary results show that more is happening on the ground than what is generally known. However, the respective leaderships in Gaza and the West Bank are tightening their instruments of control amid a general feeling of an ever-deepening socio-political crisis and deadlock. This poses a formidable challenge and risk for local actors to make the people’s demand for reconciliation heard.

Tackling Fragmentation and Developing Common Strategies

Civil society in Palestine and Israel has become more rather than less fragmented in recent years. This is due not only to the separation between Israeli and Palestinian civil societies, but also to the dispersal and, in some places, isolation of the various Palestinian territories. The Open Forum set up by HEKS (the aid organisation of the Protestant Churches of Switzerland) cannot stop this trend, but it may be able to counteract it.

The Open Forum offers partner organisations a platform for sharing ideas and developing common strategies and projects. Currently there are around fifteen Palestinian, Palestinian-Israeli and Jewish-Israeli organisations taking part. The support provided by HEKS focuses particularly on developing joint projects involving two or more organisations campaigning for access to land and fair living conditions for all on the basis of human rights. HEKS also ensures that the participants have the opportunity to exchange information and hosts regular meetings between partner organisations.
In the course of this work, partner organisations have often stressed that they did not realise how similar their problems were until they came into contact with their counterparts from other regions. One partner organisation from east Jerusalem, for example, was surprised to find that partners in mixed communities in Israel also have to deal with house demolitions. This prompted the launch of an initiative that allowed young adults from both areas who had been affected by this problem to share ideas on what action they could take and organise joint visits for a broader group.

When it comes to planning, monitoring and evaluating the projects, HEKS also tries to create a space for participatory approaches and more in-depth cooperation. For instance, it is currently running a scheme in which several partner organisations are working with people who are benefitting from their support to define what would constitute success or a welcome change in their particular context, and what steps could be taken towards achieving this.

Coping with Trauma in the Palestinian Territory

Rasha is eight years old. Ever since the last Gaza conflict in the summer of 2014, she has been suffering from anxiety and will only venture out of nursery to go to the bathroom in her own home if she is accompanied by an adult. She is one of roughly 1,500 children who have been receiving psychosocial support from the NGO Palestinian Working Women's Society for Development (PWWSD) since 2014. According to statistics compiled by the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme (GCMHP), around half of the children living in the Gaza Strip suffer from post-traumatic stress disorders. The children's parents are often unable to help them because they themselves have been under extremely severe stress and cannot find the strength to support others.

The specialist service provided by PWWSD helps those affected to get back into a normal daily routine. For the past six years, the NGO has been offering individual and group therapy sessions not only in the Gaza Strip, which has been heavily affected by the conflict, but also at various locations in the West Bank. These are run by PWWSD's interdisciplinary team of psychologists, social workers, teachers and health professionals.

The feminist Peace Organisation cfd supports the NGO not only financially, but also by providing relevant specialist expertise. Since the Israeli military is continuing to impose a hermetic blockade on the Gaza Strip, it is impossible for the PWWSD team to go to the West Bank. The local team leader can therefore only brief her staff via video conference between Ramallah and Gaza City. cfd covers the costs of engaging a psychologist from Germany who travels to the West Bank and the Gaza Strip twice a year to provide specialised training and the necessary supervision in the Palestinian territory. For the local employees, who are themselves deeply affected by working in an environment scarred by violence, this support is vital if they are to provide children like Rasha with professional and sustainable care, improve their psychological well-being and help to rebuild social structures in the Gaza Strip in the long term.
Forging a Peaceful Link between Israel and Palestine through Medical Care

medico international switzerland
Shirin Amrad
Project Manager for Palestine and Israel

For more than 20 years, medico international switzerland has been campaigning for all people in Israel and Palestine to enjoy the right to health. With this in mind, the organisation promotes Israeli and Palestinian civil society projects that provide basic medical care and support the fight against human rights violations as well as efforts to find a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The mobile clinic run by the medical human rights organisation Physicians for Human Rights – Israel (PHR) has been receiving support from medico since 1998. PHR’s long-term goal is to ensure full respect for the human rights of all people living in Israel and under Israeli occupation.

The mobile clinic provides medical care for Palestinian villagers who have very little access to healthcare services due to restrictions on their freedom of movement or a lack of medical infrastructure. Every Saturday, a team of specialised medical volunteers from both Palestine and Israel drives to marginalised communities in the West Bank to carry out medical examinations and supply medication.

In addition to offering what is often the only opportunity for people in the occupied zone to receive medical care, the clinic also forges an urgently needed link between the Israeli and Palestinian people – people who, as a result of separation, often only encounter each other in conflict situations and whose impressions of one another are increasingly reduced to enemy stereotypes. The organisation carries out essential work in the field of medical care and raising awareness and thus plays an important role in peacebuilding in Israel and the occupied territory.

Sternberg – A Haven of Peace

Mission 21
Johannes Klemm
Programme Manager

Very little attention is paid to mentally disabled people in Palestine. No state support is provided and mental disabilities are still largely a taboo subject in Palestinian society. Families with disabled children are therefore faced with having to care for and support them without any help, which is often more than they can cope with. People with disabilities, some of whom are seriously neglected, live on the very edges of society; they are denied the chance to receive an education and develop normally.

The Sternberg rehabilitation centre, which is backed by Mission 21 and is based near Ramallah, has been successfully supporting mentally disabled children and young people for many years. The services it offers range from running a nursery school and providing a school education and vocational training through to sustainable community work.

Children at the centre’s special school are taught essential skills for everyday life, as well as being offered physiotherapy and art therapy. The integrated nursery gives children with and without disabilities the chance to develop together. The training provided at the vocational support centre covers a wide range of areas, including horticulture, agriculture, forestry, household management and handicrafts, and is designed to prepare young people with mental disabilities for life outside the Sternberg environment. One of the aims of the village development programme is to raise awareness amongst families and government and municipal officials of the rights and needs of mentally disabled people. Staff members from the Sternberg centre also carry out home visits to support, advise and provide care for children with mental disabilities and their families.
Sternberg is a haven of peace in the heart of a politically turbulent region. Mentally disabled people can go there to receive support, regardless of their religion, and peaceful cooperation between Christian and Muslim staff is a matter of course.

Profile of a Palestinian Peace Activist in the West Bank

Sumaya Farhat-Naser was born in the same year as the state of Israel and, even as a young girl, she fought for the right to study. After completing her studies in Germany she returned to her homeland of Palestine, where she worked as a lecturer in botany and ecology at Birzeit University from 1982 to 1997. She then went on to head up the Jerusalem Center for Women, a Palestinian organisation, until the road to Jerusalem was more or less cut off in 2001.

Sumaya has since been continuing her peace work in the West Bank, running seminars aimed at boosting the self-confidence of young women, couples and adolescents and teaching them how to resolve their conflicts without resorting to violence. Over the years, she has constantly developed her training programmes, which she offers to students in Germany and Switzerland as well as in Palestine. The core topics she covers in her training include non-violent communication and dialogue skills, personal development, conflict management, social skills, civic education and how to deal with information and the media.

Within this protected environment, young people are able to talk openly about their experiences, fears and doubts often for the first time in their lives. The intensive discussions pick up on all kinds of subjects. This proves to be a liberating and empowering experience for the participants, enabling them to cope better with the challenges of life under occupation without losing hope or turning to violence and thus preparing them to engage in political activities too. Women for Peace Switzerland has been supporting Sumaya’s peacebuilding efforts since 1997.

Short Portrait of the EAPPI: Principles and Activities

The “Ecumenical Accompaniment Programme in Palestine and Israel” (EAPPI) was set up in 2001 by the World Council of Churches. In Switzerland, the programme comes under the aegis of HEKS, with Peace Watch Switzerland taking care of its operational management.

The work of the EAPPI is based on three core principles: protective presence, documentation and solidarity, and advocacy. The organisation’s long-standing presence in Palestine, along with its widespread acceptance and networks amongst the local population, are important strategic advantages. It also enjoys broad support from both Israeli and Palestinian NGOs thanks to its refusal to enter into any cooperation with armed groups and its commitment to upholding international law and human rights. These factors help to enable EAPPI employees, dressed in their special vests emblazoned with the EAPPI logo, to provide protection for the people they are supporting.
The activities surrounding the threatened demolition of the Palestinian village of Susiya demonstrate how the principles mentioned above rely on and complement one another. The EAPPI team has been making regular visits to Susiya since 2011. In early June 2015, in light of the acute threat facing the village, the EAPPI was asked by the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in the occupied Palestinian territory to set up a 24-hours presence there. It took less than two weeks to put together a team of EAPPI volunteers, two of whom are from Switzerland.

Local and international organisations immediately got started on intensive advocacy work. EAPPI volunteers on site wrote letters to their embassies, parliaments and diplomatic representatives, which prompted the US Department of State, some EU foreign ministers and the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs to urge Israel to abandon its plans to demolish Susiya. At the end of July, two solidarity demonstrations took place including a large number of Israeli peace organisations. In addition, delegations of journalists and diplomats visited the village and reports appeared in the international media. The hearing before the Israeli Supreme Court has now been postponed and the destruction of the village has been prevented for the time being. No matter how this story ends, there is no doubt that the principles applied by the EAPPI proved effective.

The Role and Work of the Forum for Human Rights in Israel and Palestine

The Forum for Human Rights in Israel and Palestine is a working group made up of Swiss development and human rights organisations operating in the Israel/Palestine region. It advocates the respect for human rights in Israel and Palestine and supports approaches aimed at resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict based on international law.

The aim of the forum is to reinforce the adoption of a human rights-based approach in conflict analysis and in the policies and projects of authorities and civil society actors in Switzerland. With this in mind, it engages in groundwork, public relations activities and lobbying campaigns. This year, its focus has been on Switzerland’s military cooperation with conflicting parties in Israel and Palestine and the issue of international legal responsibility in connection with economic transactions between Swiss companies or the Swiss state and actors in Israel and Palestine. These priorities were set based on the relevance and urgency of the topics in question.

Last February, the forum’s activities included arranging a study visit to Israel and Palestine for Swiss members of parliament. The purpose of this trip was to deepen the participants’ knowledge regarding the issues of human rights and international humanitarian law. Various forum organisations also supported a photography exhibition held in Zurich last June by Breaking the Silence, an Israeli human rights group made up of ex-soldiers. In connection with this, the forum made efforts to broker and organise talks between Breaking the Silence and interested parliamentarians.

The following organisations are involved in the forum: Amnesty International (Swiss Section), Caritas Switzerland, cfd / The feminist Peace Organisation, Association Switzerland-Palestine, Fachstelle OeME (the Office for Ecumenism, Mission Work and Development Cooperation) of the Reformed Churches of Bern-Jura-Solothurn, HEKS (the aid organisation of the Protestant Churches of Switzerland), Horyzon, the Jewish Voice for Democracy and Justice in Israel/Palestine, medico international switzerland and Palästina Solidarität Basel.
The Role of Switzerland in Inter-Palestinian Reconciliation

Whereas inter-Palestinian reconciliation efforts reached a stalemate in 2011, Switzerland initiated a bottom-up approach in the education and healthcare sectors in Gaza, with the aim of reintegrating thousands of Palestinian Authority civil servants who stopped working after Hamas took power in June 2007. Switzerland’s commitment to Palestinian unity was based, from the outset, on the requirement that the two-state solution be preserved, which involves a reconciliation between Fatah and Hamas, and thus a reunification between the Palestinian Authority and Hamas’ de facto authority in Gaza.

Following the conclusion of the reconciliation agreement in April 2014, which led to the formation of a Government of National Consensus, the salaries of thousands of employees hired by the de facto authorities in Gaza ceased to be paid. When the war ended in summer 2014, Switzerland was granted a facilitation mandate by the Palestinian Prime minister and Hamas to resolve the employee salary crisis and then undertake consultations in order to reach an agreement on the reintegration arrangements for the civilian public sector in Gaza.

The result of intensive consultations with Hamas and the Palestinian Authority/Fatah and a joint effort between the political directorate of the FDFA, swisspeace, the SDC and in partnership with the UN, a roadmap setting out short, medium and long-term measures designed to consolidate the whole of the public sector workforce in Gaza was finalised in late September 2014. In October, Switzerland, in conjunction with the key actors in the international community, facilitated humanitarian payments (“salaries”) to some 23,000 public sector workers in Gaza thanks to the involvement of the UN and financing from Qatar. While the principles of the roadmap were endorsed by key Palestinian stakeholders, no concrete progress has been made since then, due to a lack of sufficient agreement between Fatah and Hamas on related issues, such as control over crossing points in Gaza.

In spite of the current adverse conditions, the facilitation work undertaken by Swiss diplomats is set to continue. One of the methodological cornerstones of this process has resided, since 2011, in the combination of conventional facilitation techniques with a longer-term approach towards public sector reform.

The Involvement of the SDC in the Occupied Palestinian Territory

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has been running a cooperation programme in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) since 1994. Its involvement is aligned with Switzerland’s objective in the region, namely to contribute to the establishment of favourable conditions for a negotiated, fair and lasting peace solution between Israelis and Palestinians that enables two democratic, viable and safe states to co-exist.

To this end, the SDC is involved in three key areas: 1) promoting the respect for human rights and international humanitarian law (in cooperation with the FDFA’s Human Security Division as part of a joint strategy); 2) strengthening the capacities of local and national institutions to provide services in a transparent, inclusive and responsible manner; and 3) improving the performance and resilience of farmers.
and contributing to the creation of a more favourable economic framework. In all of its activities, the SDC pays particular attention to governance and gender issues.

On average, the SDC invests CHF 20 million in the OPT every year, which is allocated to humanitarian and international development actors and local partners from the civil society. The SDC also supports UNWRA, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, by donating around CHF 20 million to the region every year. Switzerland is actively involved in the Agency’s governing bodies.

In addition to increased humanitarian commitments during times of armed conflict, such as in Gaza in the summer of 2014, the activities of the SDC also respond to challenges relating to structural problems that affect the OPT.

The SDC’s programme is implemented by a cooperation office in East Jerusalem and a programme office in Gaza, in coordination with the FDFA’s other stakeholders.

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**ICP: Mediation of Mining Conflicts in Morocco**

**The Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (ICP)**  
Pascal Gemperli  
Co-Director

Since 2013, the Institute for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding (ICP) has been supporting local actors in their efforts to mediate mining conflicts in Morocco by providing technical assistance and contributing to capacity building.

Mining is an important economic sector in Morocco. The country is the world’s leading phosphate exporter (making up approximately ¼ of exports), the seventh largest coal exporter and the tenth largest producer of lead and silver. This activity often leads to social, political and environmental conflicts involving numerous parties.

Recognising the importance of mediation, Morocco adopted Law 08-05 in 2007 to promote conventional mediation. But since then, little has changed in the sector. It is therefore now appropriate to encourage the institutionalisation of mediation and build the capacity of mediators in order to ensure the effectiveness of their work and guarantee quality results.

In June 2015, the ICP began a new phase of its project supported by the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs. This project aims to transform the mining conflicts in Morocco and other conflicts of this type through the training of specialised mediators. To maintain the skills and promote mediation, the project is three-pronged: an in-depth analysis of the conflict and the development of a situational analysis and outlook; the implementation of initial mediation training in Morocco according to Swiss criteria; and the creation of a professional association of mediators in order to develop a pool of professionals, thereby institutionalising the sector. The cross-cutting themes include the gender approach, promoting human rights and transforming resource conflicts.
KOFF Training Series 2015/16

With its training series 2015/16, the Centre for Peacebuilding (KOFF) offers specific methodological tools and approaches for peacebuilding, development and humanitarian actors working in conflict-affected and fragile contexts. The trainings are opportunities for mutual learning, skills training and experience sharing. They are designed for practitioners and academics interested in bridging theory and concepts with practical knowledge, good practices and lessons learned from field-based conflict analysis practice.

› **Conflict Analysis**  
  **18-20 November 2015**

This training offers guidance on conflict analysis tool selection and provides lessons drawn from field practice on addressing key challenges in carrying out, updating and utilising effective conflict analysis.

› **Theories of Change in Fragile Contexts**  
  **17-19 February 2016**

Aid workers and peacebuilders are increasingly using theories of change to help organisations contribute to relevant change and transition out of fragility. This training focuses on how ‘good’ theories of change can be created that will help practitioners gain an in-depth understanding of their programmes and their impacts.

› **Conflict Sensitivity**  
  **27-29 April 2016**

Peacebuilding, development and humanitarian interventions aim at contributing to a positive impact on the contexts within which they take place. This training provides an understanding of the concept of conflict sensitivity and practical tools for applying conflict sensitivity in strategic and operational aspects of programme management.

› **Connecting Human Rights & Conflict Transformation**  
  **8-10 June 2016**

Despite wide recognition of the close links between human rights, conflict, peace and development, these fields are often treated separately. This training seeks to go beyond this divide and focuses on moving from concepts to practice and how this can be implemented in the design, implementation and evaluation of projects.

## International Partner Organisations

News from the international peacebuilding scene and KOFF partner organisations

**Berghof Foundation**

**CDA Collaborative Learning Projects**

**Conciliation Resources**

**FriEnt**

The year 2015 has been marked by a host of ongoing policy processes taking place at the international level. Among them, the UN development agenda beyond 2015, about to be adopted by world leaders, as well as the review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture. These processes, which are of paramount importance to the future of peacebuilding, come at a time when traditional peacebuilding methods and instruments are struggling to prove their efficiency. What will be the influence of the current processes and issues on the future of peacebuilding? Which current approaches should be reconsidered and adapted to meet the challenges of the future? These are the questions that participants at the FriEnt Peacebuilding Forum
2015 will attempt to answer. Entitled “Re:think Peacebuilding!” it will take place from 30 September to 1 October in Berlin.

In addition, FriEnt recently published its 2013-2014 annual report. “Entwicklung für Frieden” [Development for Peace] provides an opportunity to take stock of the work undertaken by the German group over the past two years and compare it with recent developments on an international level. On one hand, the proliferation of armed conflicts, and on the other hand, the post-2015 process. The report stresses the importance of the link between peace, development and sustainability and looks at the challenges that the fields of peacebuilding and development will face in the future.

EU Differentiation and Israeli Settlements

A new report published by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) highlights the EU’s approach to differentiating between Israel and the Israeli settlements in the West Bank within the context of bilateral relations. According to the authors of the report, the EU has in fact already been pursuing a differentiation policy for years, with a legally driven consensus around differentiation already beginning to emerge within the EU. With this in mind, the authors are now calling for the EU member states to make an even greater effort to pull together and for more areas – particularly financial transactions – to be included in the differentiation process. In their view, the focus should not be on isolating Israel, but on paving the way for deepening EU-Israeli relations in the long term without violating the EU’s legal obligations. The authors also believe that a reinforced and extended policy of differentiation could provide an important incentive for Israel to do more to reassess the status quo.

New Impetus for Putting an End to the Stalemate in Gaza

Following the unprecedented destruction in Gaza last summer, international donors promised to contribute 3.5 billion US dollars towards its reconstruction. However, not much has happened since then. Little progress has been made on the reconstruction work, violations of international law have gone unpunished, and Gaza remains cut off from the West Bank. In light of this, the Association of International Development Agencies (AIDA) has published a report outlining a possible course of action for tackling the root causes of the recurrent conflict and ensuring that international engagement with Gaza is on the right track. The report has been co-signed by several dozen NGOs, including Swiss organisations such as Horyzon, Médecins du Monde Switzerland and KOFF member medico international switzerland.
2015 Global Peace Index

The state of global peace is marked by contrasts. While some OECD countries have reached an all-time high in terms of peacefulness, other regions – especially the Middle East and North Africa – have seen the level of violence rise sharply. That is one of the findings from this year’s edition of the Global Peace Index (GPI), an annual survey published by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) which examines 162 countries based on a wide range of criteria to assess how peaceful they are. Generally speaking, the world has been less peaceful during the past year than it was as recently as in 2008. This is due to factors such as a substantial increase in refugees and displaced persons, the number of deaths caused by domestic conflicts and the effects of terrorism. Switzerland is listed as the fifth most peaceful country behind New Zealand, Austria, Denmark and Iceland, thus retaining its ranking from the previous year. Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq, countries wracked by civil war, find themselves at the bottom of the rankings. The GPI’s interactive website also offers informative illustrations and interesting facts about all of the countries included in the survey.

Upcoming Events

5 September 2015

The “Kairos Palestine” document is a call for peace in Israel and Palestine by over 1,000 Palestinian Christians. On 5 September, a conference takes place in Lucerne that aims to discuss this document and reflect on possible courses of action. Further information and inscriptions (still open)

9 September 2015

The SDC is organising a conference, to be held on 9 September, dedicated to celebrating the 15th anniversary of Resolution 1325 and evaluating its impact. Held at the Maison de la Paix in Geneva, the conference will gather the experiences and opinions of various local and international actors so that they can then be forwarded to the UN in New York. Further information.

30 September - 1 October 2015

Berlin will host the Peacebuilding Forum organised by the German group FriEnt for the second year running. Entitled “Re:think Peacebuilding!”, this forum provides an opportunity for professionals in the field to address current policies, trends and issues regarding peacebuilding.

13 October 2015

“Responding to Violent Conflict in the Future” is the title of swisspeace’s upcoming annual conference, to be held on 13 October at Fabrikhalle 12 in Bern. Further information and registration by 5 October.

Until 31 October 2015

swisspeace’s 5-day Gender Equality & Peacebuilding course reflects on methodologies for understanding gender dimensions of conflict and the impact of peacebuilding on gender relations; key issues for post-conflict transformation of gender relations in economic, social, legal and political spheres; the role of women’s agency, women’s rights, masculinities and the implication of gender stereotypes in conflict and peacebuilding. Further information and registration by 31 October.

2 - 6 November 2015

swisspeace’s 5-day Business, Conflict & Peace course explores the role of multi-stakeholder initiatives and policies in business, conflict and peace and critically discusses practical insights on state, company and civil society engagement in this field. Further information and registration ASAP.
In November, the second “Geneva Peace Week” will take place. Organised by the Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (GPP) under the patronage of the United Nations Office at Geneva, this week aims to bring together various actors to promote dialogue around issues relating to peacebuilding. Further information and registration before 1 September 2015.

The KOFF training Conflict Analysis offers guidance on conflict analysis tool selection and provides lessons drawn from field practice on addressing key challenges in carrying out, updating and utilising effective conflict analysis. Further information and registration ASAP.

swisspeace’s 5-day Conflict Prevention & Early Warning course explores and critically discusses the theoretical reflections on the understanding of conflict prevention, the current implementation efforts as well as possible avenues to enhance conflict prevention and early warning. Further information and registration by 30 September 2015.

The 5-day National Dialogue & Peace Mediation course offered by swisspeace and the Berghof Foundation provides insights in how to understand, design and support National Dialogue processes; training in dialogue and mediation skills and reflection on lessons that can be drawn from previous cases. Further information and registration by 30 November 2015.

On the KOFF website you can find more information about upcoming roundtables and events organised by KOFF.