



**A Spectrum of Light in the
Middle East**

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About The Prism Group

The Prism Group has been hard at work over the last few weeks, on a number of important projects. Our mission statement expresses our interest in spreading information about the Middle East. We are interested in human rights issues, democracy, and working to help further cooperation, discussion and peace.

Recently, we have focused our efforts on learning about minority groups, children and women. These are the people most affected by the ongoing hostilities in the Middle East, and the people least able to protect themselves. The children have little say in the current situation, even though the future will be theirs. In many countries in the Middle East, women still do not have the right to vote, to drive, to receive equal pay for equal work, and more. The Prism Group believes that working to better the treatment of women and children in the area will help raise the quality of life for all.

The Prism Group is also very concerned about the treatment of other minorities, such as the Christians in the West Bank, the Kurds in Iraq, and the Jews in Syria.

As Easter approaches, we ask you to spare a thought and a prayer for Christians in certain Middle Eastern countries whose freedom of worship is restricted. Specifically, we ask you to focus on Christians in the Palestinian controlled areas of the holy land. Our website contains a [fact sheet](#) about their situation.

The Prism Group Website:

The Prism Group's website has undergone a major facelift. If you haven't had a chance to see our updated site, why not take a moment now and surf to: www.theprismgroup.org.

Fact Sheet Update

The Prism Group continues to work on new fact sheets that examine areas of importance in the Middle East. Currently, our teams are hard at work researching human rights issues such as:

- Women in the Middle East
- Children in the Middle East

- Treatment of Religious Holy Sites
- Expanding Democracies in the Middle East
- Minorities in the Middle East

We hope to bring these and other fact sheets to you in the near future.

Action Items

As the situation in Iraq starts to clear, the world has indicated its determination to help resolve the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. In this context, The Prism Group believes that the key to the future is the children of the region. Israeli and Palestinian children continue to suffer from the ongoing effects of terrorism and violence in the Middle East. We urge you to write to the leaders of the Middle East, asking that they do all that they can to keep children out of the fighting:

Chairman Yasser Arafat: info@gov.ps

Prime Minister Ariel Sharon: pm_eng@pmo.gov.il

Our research has also discovered that the United Nations Relief and Work Agency (UNRWA) operates over 250 schools in the West Bank and Gaza. In the last two years, they have introduced 58 new textbooks that completely ignore the existence of the State of Israel.

We urge you to write to **Kofi Annan** and demand that these books be replaced with books that will further the call for peace in the Middle East. Send a fax to: (212) 963-7055 (in the US).

We also hope that you will alert others to the important issues discussed on our site. Download the fact sheets and send them to friends and colleagues. Write us at info@theprismgroup.org with other ideas that you think should be explored and exposed.

Other Projects

The Prism Group is involved in several important issues with governmental and non-governmental agencies in Europe and the Middle East. We have distributed information to all Members of the European Parliament in the form of a position paper on the need for an inquiry into the misuse of European Funds by the Palestinian Authority. This was researched and written by our volunteers and we are very proud of their efforts.

According to several sources that have offered material to The Prism Group, it is becoming apparent that monies that were meant to better the lives of Palestinians has been funneled to support corruption and terrorist activities. [Click here](#) to see the Prism Group position paper. We hope our work in exposing this corruption will help redirect future funds to those most in need.

It is heartening to see this week's [announcement by the European Commission](#) of a further €15 million in humanitarian aid to the most defenseless victims of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict – ordinary Palestinians living in the Palestinian Authority territories.

Given that the reforms being promoted by Europe have not been implemented, it is pleasing to see this aid is not being channeled directly through the PA institutions, but rather through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), the World Food Programme (WFP), Non Governmental Organisations and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). We have written another fact sheet on the concerns our volunteers expressed regarding some of UNRWA's activities in the Palestinian areas, but we are hopeful that the UN will monitor this organization more carefully in the future so that it can continue to fulfill its important mission in the Middle East. [Click here](#) to see our fact sheet on UNRWA.

Hopefully controls are in place to ensure that past exploitations of the facilities of these specific organizations' resources for education to and direct support of terror will be curbed in relation to this aid money, and that it will reach its intended destinations intact.

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