



A Spectrum of Light in the Middle East

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Update on The Prism Group

Often lost in the midst of a conflict are those who are too weak or too young to make their plight known. As conflict in the Middle East ebbs and flows, The Prism Group continues to work on behalf of those communities that we feel do not always have a voice. In recent months, we have studied the plight of women and the status of the Christian minority in many areas. But our attention has returned again and again to the children, the future of the Middle East.

This month, we have released an [in-depth report](#) on how Palestinian children are being educated. When children are taught violence and hatred, it becomes inevitable that the society in which they live becomes more violent as well. The evidence is disturbing, and we urge you to read the report, and then write to your local politicians to demand that international aid be directed towards peace.

Finally, in recent weeks we also completed a translation to Spanish of our first three fact sheets:

- [La actitud palestina hacia los árabes cristianos](#)
- [Niños del Oriente Medio](#)
- [UNRWA](#)

Palestinian Children and the Roadmap

The most recent roadmap seems to be different than previous peace-making attempts in that it stresses the need for performance. Adherence to the roadmap is to be based not on words, but on deeds. Despite the 'performance-based' [Roadmap](#) formula, it seems that the sides are very busy talking and taking positions, rather than actually performing.

According to the timetable, we would expect to be well into Phase I, and yet the reality on the ground suggests that we are still in the preliminary stages, labeled "Outset of Phase I", which requires:

- **Palestinian leadership** issues unequivocal statement reiterating Israel's right to exist in peace and security and calling for an immediate and unconditional ceasefire to end armed activity and all acts of violence against Israelis anywhere. All official Palestinian institutions end incitement against Israel.

- **Israeli leadership** issues unequivocal statement affirming its commitment to the two-state vision of an independent, viable, sovereign Palestinian state living in peace and security alongside Israel, as expressed by President Bush, and calling for an immediate end to violence against Palestinians everywhere. All official Israeli institutions end incitement against Palestinians.

Repeated statements by key Israeli officials as well as concrete steps taken by Israel – including fulfilling its financial obligations to transfer funds to the Palestinian Authority and starting to implement troop withdrawal - leads the Prism Group to conclude that Israel has met its requirements at this stage, and is now being pressured to begin implementation of actual Phase I requirements.

Similarly, many of the Palestinian requirements of this outset stage have been met. Nevertheless, a 'low level' of terrorist activity still persists, with daily stoning attacks, shooting attacks, and several incidents of kidnapping and murder. The disturbing use of children in confrontation with troops and the subsequent tragic consequences continues.

On the bright side, Israel has acknowledged a significant reduction in the incitement to violence in the official Palestinian media. However, reports persist that virulent incitement is still present in the Palestinian media, despite the reduced frequency. As noted in [our report](#) on the education of Palestinian children, (in the section 'Further negative influences on the young Palestinian'), this summer season once again sees the continuation of holiday camps for very young children featuring paramilitary training. Some of the camps – including those receiving international funding through [UNICEF](#) – are named after terrorists who have committed suicide bombings and other crimes against humanity. Activities are held at these camps to glorify these people and as role models for young Palestinian society.

The media has reported that Chairman Arafat, in greeting one of these holiday camps visiting his Ramallah headquarters, praised children who attacked Israeli soldiers with stones, and encouraged the children to participate in this life-threatening activity. This is a clear violation of the roadmap, but more importantly, this is a tragedy for the future of the Middle East.

Principle 2 of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child - UN General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV) states:

The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities, by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.

Read The Prism Group's in-depth report entitled '[Palestinian Children: what are they being taught?](#)', on our [website](#).

We urge you to write to UNICEF at info@unicef.org and protest this abuse of their funds. Demand fiscal supervision and accountability, and ask them to refuse to fund programs that encourage ongoing hatred, but instead to implement programs that give hope for a future of peace.

Write to your local politicians, and ask them to get involved in this vital issue. Ask them to use their influence to demand similar action for all international aid money.

The Prism Group Website

The Prism Group's website is updated regularly to focus on new points of interest. If you haven't had a chance to see our site recently, why not take a moment now and surf to: www.theprismgroup.org.

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. Share this newsletter with your friends, and encourage them to subscribe by sending an email to newsletter@theprismgroup.org.

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