



Alliance for Peacebuilding

June 23, 2021

Administrator Samantha Power
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Administrator Power:

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) (AfP), the leading nonpartisan global network of 140+ organizations working in 181 countries to end violent conflict and build peace, and the 81 undersigned organizations congratulate you on confirmation as Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). We also applaud the elevation of your position to the National Security Council. You are an incredible champion for preventing and reducing violent conflict and mass atrocities, and your leadership and significant expertise is critical now more than ever because violent conflict and violence is an urgent global threat.

The world is experiencing a [30-year high](#) of violent conflict, which remains the [primary driver](#) of violent extremism and causes [80 percent](#) of all humanitarian needs. As of the end of 2020, more than [82.4 million people are displaced globally](#) and an estimated [235 million people](#) need humanitarian assistance and protection—about 1-in-33 people worldwide—the highest figure in decades. Climate change is also a [threat multiplier](#) and acts of genocide and mass atrocities are [dramatically increasing](#). Compounding matters, COVID-19 is [stabilization in reverse](#)—[accelerating democratic backsliding](#), [undermining human rights](#), causing a “[shadow pandemic](#)” of [gender-based violence](#), allowing autocrats to [consolidate power](#), and leading to the [proliferation](#) of violent conflict and extremism.

These developments may have lasting impacts well beyond the pandemic. The global pandemic could lead to [an additional 13 countries](#) experiencing conflict through 2022—a 56 percent increase compared to pre-COVID forecasts. Violent extremist groups have sought to [weaponize](#) the global crisis, and called on supporters to step-up attacks and spread the virus itself. Furthermore, online recruitment and dissemination of propaganda, disinformation, and conspiracy theories [skyrocketed](#) during the last year and increased the reach of violent extremist organizations and networks.



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An Urgent Call to Action: Invest in Peacebuilding and Ensure Conflict Prevention Integration throughout USAID Programs:

AfP and the undersigned organizations applaud the priorities you outlined in your confirmation hearing, including conflict prevention and mitigation, along with tackling COVID-19, climate change, and democratic backsliding. To successfully prevent and reduce violent conflict, AfP believes the U.S. government must robustly invest in peacebuilding. AfP recently submitted [testimony](#) to the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Subcommittee of the House Appropriations Committee calling for substantial funding for the implementation of the [Global Fragility Act](#) (GFA) specifically, as well as [violent and conflict prevention and peacebuilding](#) more broadly.

At USAID, a strengthened and fully funded conflict prevention approach is critical. AfP strongly supported the establishment of USAID's [Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization](#) (CPS) that elevates conflict prevention and peacebuilding as a priority for the agency. The creation of CPS, in tandem with adoption of the bipartisan GFA, are vital to addressing increasing global violent conflict and fragility. However, for CPS to be successful, it requires resources and staffing to implement the GFA, develop robust conflict prevention and peacebuilding standalone programs, and integrate conflict prevention throughout USAID's programs, policies, and strategies, including the climate change strategy currently under development.

AfP and its partners also strongly recommend an integrated multi-sectoral COVID-19 strategy with a conflict prevention lens. The COVID-19 pandemic is more than just a health and humanitarian crisis. The [Infectious Disease Vulnerability Index](#) shows conflict is present in the 25 countries most vulnerable to infectious diseases with 22 in Africa in addition to Afghanistan, Yemen, and Haiti. Under the previous Administration, the U.S. failed to lead a global response to contain the pandemic and address the increasing instability it caused. While protecting American interests, bolstering health systems, and addressing complex humanitarian crises are imperative, violent conflict and violence cannot be relegated to a fourth catch-all pillar with numerous other issues. This linear and siloed strategy treated everything other than health and humanitarian assistance as a lesser priority to be addressed after the immediate health and humanitarian crises abated.

Peacebuilding activities are critical to addressing conflict drivers and preventing violence and extremism, as recognized by Congress in the [GFA, Women, Peace, and Security \(WPS\) Act](#),



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and the [Elie Wiesel Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Act](#) (EWGAPA). However, counterterrorism laws, such as the [material support](#) prohibition, which bars a wide range of peacebuilding activities that involve interactions with members of a foreign terrorist organization (FTO)—from sharing tea at a meeting to disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) programs that assist former members of FTOs transition to civilian life, have not kept pace with evolving security challenges or new programmatic approaches. The most recent modification of the material support prohibition in 2004 did not anticipate the Congressional focus on violence, conflict, and extremism prevention as enshrined in the GFA, WPS Act, and EWGAPA. The existing bar frustrates the realization of these laws’ intent and undermines efforts that support nonviolence, facilitate DDR, curb violent extremism, and foster inclusive peace processes. The prohibition prevents the U.S. and its NGO partners from operating in the contexts in which implementation of the GFA, WPS Act, and EWGAPA are most essential. While a formal legislative fix is necessary to facilitate the unimpeded delivery of peacebuilding and foreign assistance in the most vulnerable areas, in the interim, USAID should work closely with the Secretary of State and Attorney General, who have the [authority to create exceptions](#), to ensure the delivery of peacebuilding assistance to reduce violence, armed conflict, and extremism.

AfP and the undersigned organizations call on USAID to increase its efforts to empower marginalized communities, such as women, youth, and local civil society organizations. Strengthening and empowering locally led, civil society-owned development is [vital](#) to preventing, managing, and resolving conflict and violence in fragile states, building peace, and ensuring sustainable development. In addition to protection and prevention initiatives, which are two key pillars of the WPS and [Youth, Peace, and Security](#) Agendas, USAID programming should enhance its efforts to include women, youth, and diverse local actors in program design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation processes, capacity-building, consultations, and other activities through the deployment of rapid, flexible funding that can effectively respond to changing local contexts.

Once again, congratulations on your confirmation. We welcome your commitment and resolve to prevent and reduce increasing violent conflict, one of the greatest challenges of our time. AfP stands ready to serve in partnership with you and the U.S. government to address these challenges and build sustainable peace worldwide. Thank you for your prompt attention to these pressing matters.

Sincerely,

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American Friends Service Committee

Aware Girls

The Borgen Project

Brandeis University

CDA Collaborative Learning

The Carter Center

Center for Justice and Peacebuilding at EMU

Center for Nonviolent Solutions

Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable
Development

Center for Peacemaking Practice, Carter
School for Peace and Conflict Resolution,
George Mason University

Center for Policy Analysis of Horn of Africa

Charity & Security Network

Chemonics International Inc.

Church of the Brethren, Office of
Peacebuilding and Policy

Civilian Peace Service Canada

Conciliation Resources

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the
Good Shepherd, U.S. Provinces

Conseil Consultatif de Jeunes

Creative Associates International

Crossing Party Lines

Cure Violence Global

D.C. Student Consortium on Women, Peace
and Security

Desmond Tutu Peace Lab, Butler University

DT Global

Karuna Center for Peacebuilding

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

Mediators Beyond Borders International

MENA Youth Peace and Security Coalition

Mercy Corps

Mindanao Peacebuilding Institute Foundation,
Inc.

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of
the Good Shepherd

National Partnership of Children and Youth in
Peacebuilding

Never Again Coalition

New York University Peace Research and
Education Program

NewGen Peacebuilders

Nonviolent Peaceforce

ONE Campaign

One Earth Future

Pact

Parallel Networks

PartnersGlobal

PCI, a Global Communities Partner

Peace Appeal

Peace Direct

Peace News Network

PRBB Foundation



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Educators' Institute for Human Rights
FHI 360
Free Watch Afghanistan Organization
Friends Committee on National Legislation
The Fund for Peace
Futures Without Violence
Gender Equality Initiative in International
Affairs (GEIA) Elliott School of International
Affairs, George Washington University
Generations For Peace
Global Communities
Global Water 2020
The HALO Trust
Humanity United
Institute of World Affairs
InterAction
International Alert
International Association for Political Science
Students
International Civil Society Action Network
(ICAN)
Interpeace
IYF
Refugees International
Renew Democracy Initiative
Rural Education and Agriculture
Development Organization (READO)
Saferworld
ShelterBox USA
Tanenbaum
The Toda Peace Institute, Tokyo Japan
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness
Ministries
UNOY Peacebuilders
Women for Afghan Women
Women In International Security (WIIS)
World Vision US
Y Coalition-Bangladesh
Young Adult Empowerment Initiative
Youth for Peace and Development
Youth Initiative Against Violence & Human
Rights Abuse (YIAVHA)

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