Peace in the Middle East
~Japan's Efforts~

Japan's Efforts in the Peace Process

Progress in the Middle East Peace Process yields positive influence on the situation in Iraq and the rest of the world. It contributes to the peace and stability of the Middle East region, and in turn positively influences the peace and prosperity of Japan through the peace and stability of the international community. In addition, since the issue of peace between Israel and the Palestinians involves the issues of Israeli settlements, and the Jewish state, it is a topic for the Arab countries and other Islamic states and one that has a major bearing on national sentiment in those countries. For these reasons, engaging in bilateral dialogue between nations or the Arab countries and maintaining close cooperation with the UK, the EU, and other countries and international organizations playing leading roles in the Middle East peace. Japan has been making efforts toward settlement of the issue in the political and economic fields, engaging in (1) political dialogues, (2) assistance to the Palestinians, and (3) confidence-building measures.

Various Exchange Programs and Financial Assistance to Grassroots Projects Aimed at Confidence-Building Between the Israelis and the Palestinians

1. Middle East Peace Project (Israel-Palestinian youth exchange program)

This is a bilateral exchange program among Japanese, Israeli, and Palestinian youth, through visiting youth (especially high school students) from Israel and the Palestinian Territories to Japan (in 2002) and vice versa which started by the cooperation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan in 2003. The aim was to promote youth exchange by offering them opportunities to understand each other’s backgrounds, cultures, and conditions.

2. Joint Conference of Japanese, Israeli, and Palestinian students

In addition to the above activities, the Conference of Japanese, Israeli, and Palestinian students (which started in 2004) is another positive measure. This conference is the result of the cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan and the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology of Japan. The conference is held twice a year, in October and April, in order to exchange knowledge and experience on the Middle East peace process and to promote mutual understanding and friendship among the youth.

3. Peace Kids Soccer Program

In the framework of this program, Israeli and Palestinian children are invited together to Japan, with the aim of deepening mutual understanding and friendship among Israeli, Palestinian, and Japanese children through such activities as playing soccer—the universal language for children—and events to help them accept the cultural differences. The program is conducted by a non-profit organization “Peace Kids forever” and co-organized with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Aid to Local NGOs

The Government of Japan, through its Grant Aid schemes for Grassroots Human Security Projects, is supporting local NGOs, and local public agencies in the region, which are implementing peace projects at grassroots level to facilitate mutual confidence building and cooperation between the Israelis and the Palestinians. This aid was announced by the then Minister for Foreign Affairs Yoriko Kawaguchi on the occasion of her visit to the region in April 2003.

Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan

https://www.mofa.go.jp/
The Current Situation of the Middle East Peace Process

The map of the Middle East Peace Process shows the current status of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. The process includes various tracks and initiatives aimed at achieving peace and resolving the conflict. The map highlights key locations and participants involved in the peace process.

Political dialogues

On political sides, Japan encourages both Israel and the Palestinian Authority to advance the peace process and engage in discussions with the relevant countries. In January 2006, Japan's Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi visited Japan, followed by the visit of the President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas in May of that year. In addition, the Special Envoy of the Government of Japan for the Middle East, Tatsuo Araki, regularly visits the region.

Confidence-building measures

The Government of Japan has been actively initiating and sponsoring various projects, both in Japan and in the region, to contribute to establishing confidence-building between the Israelis and the Palestinians. These initiatives are aimed at promoting dialogue and understanding between the two sides.

1. Joint Invitation Projects for Junior Diplomats from the Governments in the Middle East

Since 1996, the Japanese Government has invited almost every year both the Israeli and the Palestinian sides from various universities, government, parliamentarism, academia, media, economy, etc. who are expected to become leaders in their respective sectors. It aims to provide opportunities to exchange their views and to understand each other's situation, while building mutual understanding and cooperation.

2. Joint Invitation Programs for Israeli and Palestinian Young Leadership

Since 1997, the Japanese Government has invited almost every year both the Israeli and Palestinian sides from various universities, government, parliamentarism, academia, media, economy, etc. who are expected to become leaders in their respective sectors. It aims to provide opportunities to exchange their views and to understand each other's situation, while building mutual understanding and cooperation.

Assistance to the Palestinians

In the economic sector, Japan has been actively involved in assisting the Palestinian Authority since the Oslo Accords of 1993. Japan has extended support which consists of the following four pillars:

1. Humanitarian support
2. Assistance for the Baker Plan projects
3. Confidence-building measures for the Israelis and the Palestinians
4. Economic development assistance towards establishing a self-sustainable Palestinian economy

In March 2006, Japan has already disbursed a total of more than $300 million in assistance to the Palestinians since 1993. When President Mahama Abbas arrived in Japan on May 2005, an assistance program of $10 million was announced. In addition to this assistance, the administrative government also announced an emergency assistance of around $50 million was extended on the occasion of the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza Strip on September 2005.

Japan also provided a total of 310,000 yen for the Palestinian Legislative Council of the former Legislative Councils for the Palestinian Legislative Council of the former Legislative Councils. In addition, Japan has been implementing a pledge for the assistance to the Palestinians, recognizing that such efforts are indispensable in establishing a future Palestinian state that co-exists and co-prospers with Israel.

Summary of Japan’s Assistance to the Palestinians

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<th>Grants</th>
<th>Assistance to the Palestinians (Japan Yen)</th>
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<td>2005</td>
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Note: The figures represent the total amount of assistance provided by Japan to the Palestinian Legislative Council of the former Legislative Councils.