

Thank you Madame President for your kind and uncommon invitation to speak here in front of the Security Council, and **thank you to the members of the council and the Special Coordinator** for your attention and consideration of new ideas and hope for the future.

My name is Meredith Rothbart and I am a Jewish Israeli, a religious Zionist, speaking to you from Jerusalem. I am the co-founder and CEO of Amal-Tikva, where my Palestinian co-founder Basheer Abu-Baker and our team work with NGO leaders, philanthropists and field experts to build capacity for strategic, sustainable and scalable peace efforts. I'm here to share with you my view from the ground.

We have heard today and over the last few weeks of the continued violence between our two people. It is clear to all who are observing our political reality: Negotiations at the highest diplomatic levels would not result in substantive peace right now.

If we recall, the Oslo Accords failed because the agreement came from a secret process between elite leaders, with no women, no religious leaders, and no representatives of those wishing to disrupt the process with violence.

Neither society was prepared or ready to make compromises.

And so it is no wonder that Oslo failed, and that the disappointment by the public led to the most violent era in the history of our conflict. Let's not do that again.

Around the same time as Oslo, when violent attacks were a daily occurrence in Northern Ireland, the United States spearheaded the establishment of the International Fund for Ireland. Both Prime Ministers Bertie Ahern and Tony Blair share the view that the Fund built the social and economic foundations upon which *peace was eventually secured* more than a decade later.

The Special Coordinator today asked for affirmative steps to improve the situation on the ground. **We know that *civil society peacebuilding not only works, but is a required precondition for a negotiated peace agreement in intractable conflict.*** We know because of so many initiatives that have been proven to succeed.

We know it works when a Palestinian police officer saves a lost IDF soldier's life, not because he has to but because he wants to, out of appreciation for the Israeli volunteer from the organization **Road to Recovery who drove his brother to the hospital** just the week before....

We know it works when Rabbi Michael Melchior and Sheikh Raed Badir from the Religious Peace Initiative, the religious leaders who prevented a Third Intifada amidst violence on the Temple Mount, and who conducted negotiations which led to our unity new government -

which has a religious Zionist Prime Minister and Palestinian members of Parliament from the local **Islamic Movement**...

These are the real peace negotiators.

My close friend and mentor, [Rev. Dr. Gary Mason](#), who helped bring about peace in Northern Ireland, always says, “If you want peace today, you should have started *building it* 20 years ago. And if you don’t feel like working for peace today, then you better not complain to me in 20 years that the conflict is ongoing and affecting your children.”

The UN has passed resolution after resolution, which as a global institution is a part of the council’s agenda. But in order to build peace between Israelis and Palestinians I ask you to consider investing in a social peace.

It is no coincidence that it is the Irish who invited me here today, because the Irish know the power of civil society peacebuilding firsthand. And I must acknowledge the United States government for passing the Nita Lowey Middle East Partnership for Peace Act, the first large-scale governmental attempt at building Israeli-Palestinian peace from the ground up, with an opportunity for multilateral partnership.

I ask members of the council to take inspiration from the Irish and American peacemaking efforts and commit to investing in the infrastructure needed for peace, help us build a multilateral international entity like the International Fund in Ireland, an independent entity with the resources and mandate about to build capital projects such as a peace institute in Jerusalem modeled off of Skainos in East Belfast, a Laboratory for Program Innovation and Capacity Building, Impact Investments and Microgrants;

Invest in the infrastructure that peace needs, like the partnership between adjacent community centers in Jerusalem, who are working together to renovate their communal healthcare centers, support women entrepreneurs and make their neighborhoods safer.

Invest in building economic partnership through organizations like Tech2Peace and 50:50 Startups... who teach tech and entrepreneurship to young Israelis and Palestinians, and guide them to create startups addressing climate, food security, water, and other shared issues;

Invest in programs like Kids4Peace or Teacher’s Lounge, which enable youth and educators to not only learn each other’s narratives, but to view themselves as agents of change--

There are so many more organizations like these, with methodologies and programs that work but are not at scale... and yet could be with enough support, capacity and infrastructure.

In the ancient Jewish text known as "Pirkei Avot", the Ethics of the Fathers, we read:

"לא עליך המלאכה לגמור, ולא אתה בן חורין ליבטל ממנה."

"You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it (2:21)."

We know that in order for peace negotiations to work-- we must first break the intractable nature of the conflict down into manageable parts, tackle each of those parts one by one, and build a popular belief that peace is in fact possible, and that all people have an integral role and responsibility in its pursuit.

Thank you.