



PROJECT
on Middle East
Democracy

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THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY IN CAIRO

الجامعة الأمريكية بالقاهرة

American Studies Center

Beyond Borders: An Egyptian-American Dialogue

Cairo, Egypt
May 2-3, 2008

Policy Recommendations

The following policy recommendations were written and ratified by 48 young Egyptians and Americans at the *Beyond Borders: An Egyptian-American Dialogue* conference held on May 2nd and 3rd, 2008. The conference was organized by The Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), Americans for Informed Democracy (AID), the American Studies Center at the American University in Cairo, and the Annual Conference for Engineering Students (ACES) at Ain Shams University. The conference was supported by the U.S. State Department's Middle East Partnership Initiative (MEPI). The recommendations are directed towards the U.S. government, the Egyptian government, the media, and civil society organizations.

Media and Social Activism

- 1) Encourage non-governmental organizations in Egypt to provide training on how to use media for advocacy.
- 2) Recommend that the U.S. apply pressure on the Egyptian government to cease censoring Egyptian domestic media, including the banning and blocking of internet sites and journalists' access to information.
- 3) Encourage Egyptian state institutions to provide widespread training in technological literacy.
- 4) Encourage the creation of programming to engage illiterate Egyptians with new types of media and increase their ability to access a range of viewpoints.
- 5) Encourage the creation of popular televised media programs that accurately represents a range of Arab lifestyles to American audiences.

Dialogue of Civilizations

- 6) Increase federal funding for domestic public diplomacy tours in rural, suburban and urban areas as well as high schools in the U.S. Tour delegations will be comprised of American and Arab delegates from diverse national, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

- 7) Cultural awareness workshops for policy makers in the U.S. focusing on cultural diversity in the Middle East.
- 8) U.S. schools should offer Arabic as a "second language" choice in American public elementary, middle, and high schools. Arabic programs shall be optional and shall be supported by separate federal funding unrelated to any other source of funding, including other federal funds. Therefore, it will be specifically earmarked for Arabic only and may not be used for any other program. Studying the language will help Americans understand more about Egyptian and Arab culture and subsequently eliminate the negative stereotypes Americans have about Egyptians.
- 9) Invest more money and energy to support translation because it is the first step towards establishing a successful and strong dialogue between Egyptians and Americans.
- 10) Create an academic dialogue between professors and students in both Egypt and the U.S.
- 11) Recommend that the U.S. and Egyptian governments and civil society actors support more cross-cultural exchange programs, especially at the high school and university level.
- 12) Arabs in the U.S. need to establish organizations to represent themselves to the American society in a more organized way.
- 13) Encourage the Arab world, especially wealthy Arab states to establish Arab cultural centers in the U.S. that are publicly accessible and represent the full spectrum of the Arab experience.
- 14) Encourage dialogue between Jewish and Muslim Americans, especially in regard to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- 15) Highlight the importance of strengthening Arab-American lobby groups.

Egypt's Role in the Arab World

- 16) Recommend that the United States encourage Egypt to become more involved in current regional crises such as Darfur and Iraq while recognizing that the pursuit of joint US-Egyptian policies will benefit both parties. We also recommend that Egypt find a greater balance between drawing attention to both domestic and foreign policies.
- 17) The US should open diplomatic talks with Islamic groups like Hamas and with countries like Iran to allow for credible negotiations between all sides.
- 18) Egypt should make use of its role as a mediator in the peace process between Palestinians and Israel.

U.S. Foreign Aid to Egypt

- 19) Encourage the implementation of labor reforms including raising the salary of Egyptian governmental employees to a level sufficient to meet basic needs, as much as possible.
- 20) Encourage U.S. foreign aid to Egyptian society to support the establishment of local non-governmental organizations (working on election transparency, freedom of expression, political participation and, more generally, establishing NGOs for human rights).
- 21) Recommend that the U.S. encourage the Egyptian Ministry of Education to reform the Egyptian education system so that it encourages critical-thinking and problem solving skills, productive student-professor dialogue, and the utilization of modern technology in the classroom.
- 22) Encourage the full reinstatement of economic and social funding by USAID with
 - A larger portion of the funds going directly to non-governmental organizations instead of official agencies and/or government institutions.
 - Removal of earmarks and tied funding for USAID development projects.
 - Redirection of funds to projects based on community-identified needs as determined by research performed by these same non-governmental organizations to assist projects that are addressing community identified needs, rather than USAID determined projects.
 - Specific allocation of funds to projects directed at public education, local governance, healthcare, and poverty reduction in Egypt.