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## **“We Are Connected, But Are We Communicating?” American Foreign Policy and Jordanian Society: A Dialogue**

**Amman, Jordan  
May 29 - 31, 2008**

### **Policy Recommendations**

The following policy recommendations were written and ratified by 40 young Jordanians, Americans and Iraqis at the “We Are Connected, But Are We Communicating? American Foreign Policy and Jordanian Society: A Dialogue” conference held in Amman, Jordan May 29 - 31, 2008. The conference was organized by Americans for Informed Democracy (AID), the Project on Middle East Democracy (POMED), Leaders of Tomorrow, and the Center for Strategic Studies. 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 Jordanian government, and civil society organizations.

- 1) The U.S. Department of State should double funding for international exchange programs between Jordanians and Americans, earmarking funds specifically for middle school, high school, and university levels. These international educational exchanges should include summer internships, semesters abroad, academic fellowships, and other related programs.
- 2) The U.S. Department of State should publicize funds available for international exchange in the pursuit of increasing socioeconomic diversity in those programs. Such an effort should include a media campaign specifically targeting disadvantaged youth. Similarly, the Jordanian Ministry of Education should make a deliberate effort to increase socioeconomic diversity in programs that send Jordanians to America through a publicity campaign in government schools to increase awareness of available programs.
- 3) The U.S. government should modify funded cross-cultural exchange programs to allow Iraqis living in Jordan to apply from Jordan and participate in these programs apart from the seats allocated for Jordan.
- 4) The governments should collaborate to connect twenty Jordanian and twenty American schools with each other through a sister-school program. Video conferencing technology should be included in this effort to facilitate dialogue about international affairs and cultural issues. If this program is successful, it should be implemented on a larger scale.

- 5) The U.S. government should earmark money for Arabic language instruction in public primary and secondary schools. The Jordanian government should create an independent committee to evaluate the effectiveness of English language instruction in government schools, and act on its recommendations. Both governments should encourage and create programs for language teacher exchange.
- 6) Congress should pass a joint resolution expressing the urgency and necessity of addressing the needs of Iraqi refugees in Jordan.
- 7) The U.S. and Jordanian governments should work with NGOs in Jordan to reduce tensions between the Iraqi refugee population and their Jordanian neighbors by promoting community building activities, such as neighborhood discussion forums and youth events in places where these populations come together.
- 8) The United States and the Jordanian government should advocate for the creation of a United Nations commission responsible for developing an accurate and comprehensive census with the specific aim of capturing the number of Iraqis living in Jordan. This commission shall also develop policy recommendations to meet the needs of this displaced population.
- 9) Congress should continue to allocate appropriate funds to the Jordanian Ministry of Education to alleviate the budgetary burden resulting from the influx of Iraqi refugees in schools. Moreover, each fiscal year the Government Accountability Office will be responsible for issuing a report that details the application of funding.
- 10) Congress should increase appropriated funds to the Department of Homeland Security/Citizenship and Immigration Services (DHS/CIS) for fiscal year 2009. Additionally, DHS/CIS should increase the number of special immigrant visas allocated to Iraqi refugees.
- 11) Jordan's Ministry of Information and Technology (MOIT) should increase the number of "Knowledge Stations" throughout the Kingdom by donating used government computers and linking more of them to the Internet. In addition, the MOIT should work with private Internet providers to expand Internet access to traditionally underserved communities.
- 12) The Jordanian Ministry of Education should:
  - Increase the scope of computer training for teachers to include Internet skills;
  - Hold free computer and internet courses for the general public at community centers, libraries and universities around Jordan.
- 13) The State Department Human Rights Country Report should more accurately reflect the reality of free speech on the Internet in Jordan.
- 14) U.S. cultural and educational exchange programs should incorporate cyber activism into alumni activities.

- 15) USAID-funded Jordan Media Strengthening Program (JMSP-IREX) should:
- Be expanded to encourage citizen journalism;
  - Support online journalism courses at Jordanian universities;
  - Clarify internet press freedom laws in Jordan.
- 16) USAID and the Jordanian Ministry of Education should coordinate to bring about a partnership program between high schools in the U.S. and Jordan whereby they bring video conferencing events to high school-aged students.
- 17) USAID should recognize the existence of mistrust towards USAID programs and policies among the Jordanian citizenry. Thus USAID should place more importance on Jordanian perceptions of how aid could better suit their immediate needs. For example, USAID should strengthen ties with local community leaders in order to promote and demonstrate long-term sustainability and cooperation at the local level. Additionally, USAID should work to improve its program by:
- a. Creating a directory of volunteering opportunities for young people in Jordan, as well as programs that foster dialogue;
  - b. Increasing the transparency of local proposals and post-project audits to limit fraud.
- 18) Assuming that illicit interference in Jordanian elections, such as vote-buying and meddling with polling stations, exists and may continue to proliferate, we suggest that USAID should increase election-monitoring training programs, which focus on the aforementioned obstacles that are present in the Jordanian electoral process.
- 19) Noting the void present between the allocation of aid among diverse social classes:
- a. USAID should review the distribution of funds for sponsored programs and target vulnerable and often neglected populations of Jordanian society;
  - b. Upon completion of said review, USAID must consider, and perhaps reallocate funds, that will help those neglected populations.