



Alliance for Peacebuilding

April 15, 2021

Secretary of State Antony Blinken

U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Acting Administrator Gloria Steele

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

Dear Secretary Blinken and Acting Administrator Steele,

The [Alliance for Peacebuilding](#) (AfP), the leading nonpartisan global network to end violent conflict and build sustainable peace, on behalf of its 130+ members working in 181 countries and the 67 undersigned organizations, urges the Department of State and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) to ensure conflict prevention and peacebuilding programs are robustly funded and integrated in the U.S. government's COVID-19 strategy and supplemental funding from the [American Rescue Plan](#).

COVID-19 is more than a public health emergency it's [stabilization in reverse](#) for countries globally. The [United States](#) was severely impacted despite being highly rated on [the infectious disease vulnerability index](#). Fragile and conflict affected states are even more at risk to the whole-of-society destabilizing impacts of 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. The potential for more conflict wrought by the pandemic is compounded by the fact that major violent conflict events have [tripled](#) since 2010 due to a rise in intrastate conflict and non-state armed groups.

During a time when democracy was already [under threat](#), the COVID-19 pandemic has, in many countries, [accelerated democratic backsliding](#) and allowed autocrats to further consolidate power. These developments may have lasting impacts well beyond the pandemic. Violent extremist groups have sought to [weaponize](#) the global crisis, and have called on supporters to [step-up attacks and spread the virus itself](#). Furthermore, [online recruitment and dissemination](#) of propaganda, disinformation, and conspiracy theories have [skyrocketed](#) during the last year and increased the reach of violent extremist organizations and networks.

The international community's strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic has been [insufficient to integrate the lessons learned](#) from previous disease outbreaks. To contain and prevent the pandemic and reduce and prevent conflict globally, conflict prevention and peacebuilding must be integrated throughout the U.S. government's pandemic response. The former Administration's USAID and State Department joint COVID-19 strategy did not address the whole-of-society



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destabilizing impacts of the pandemic on conflict affected and fragile states by only prioritizing protecting American interests, bolstering health systems, and addressing complex humanitarian crises. Such a linear and siloed strategy treated peacebuilding, stability, and conflict prevention as a second-order priority after the distribution of health and humanitarian aid. However, a holistic approach is necessary in order to effectively mitigate the drivers and effects of violence, extremism, and violent conflict.

Even without adequate foreign assistance during the current global pandemic, [peacebuilders](#) are working to ensure [conflict-sensitive distribution](#) of aid and healthcare, pivoting to [online engagement](#), [applying lessons learned](#) from previous health crises such as [Ebola](#), and developing new ways to disseminate reliable information. Peacebuilders are collaborating [across sectors](#) to catalyze positive change, promote stability, and combat democratic backsliding. These efforts are vital to containing and preventing the spread of COVID-19, as well as preventing and reducing increased conflict dynamics destabilizing regions already at risk for violence, extremism, and violent conflict.

AfP urges the Department of State and USAID to prioritize conflict prevention and peacebuilding in the U.S. government's COVID-19 strategy and foreign assistance funding provided for in the American Rescue Plan in tandem with health and humanitarian aid. Failure to do so will have significant long-term implications on global instability and U.S. national security.

Sincerely,

+Peace

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Amani-Institute ASBL

Aware Girls

Brigada de Voluntarios Bolivarianos del Peru - BVBP

CDA Collaborative Learning

Center for Nonviolent Solutions

Center for Peace Advocacy and Sustainable Development (CEPASD Africa)

Center for Policy Analysis of Horn of Africa

Center on Conscience & War

Charity & Security Network

Chemonics International

Citizens for Global Solutions

Clearinghouse on Women's Issues



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Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces

DC Peace Team

Desmond Tutu Peace Lab, Butler University

District of Columbia

EIHR: The Educators' Institute for Human Rights

Food for the Hungry

Free Watch Afghanistan Organization

Friends Committee on National Legislation

Generations For Peace

Global Communities

Global Water 2020

Grace Initiative Global

Hands of Peace

Humanity United

Institute of World Affairs

International Association for Political Science Students (IAPSS)

International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)

International Medical Corps

International Youth Foundation

iPEACE

Karuna Center for Peacebuilding

Leadership Conference of Women Religious

MENA Coalition for YPS

Mercy Corps

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

National Partnership of Children and Youth in Peacebuilding

NewGen Peacebuilders

One Earth Future

PartnersGlobal

Pax Christi USA

PCI, a Global Communities Partner

Peace Catalyst International

Peace Direct

Peace Initiative Network



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PRBB Foundation

Saferworld

Search for Common Ground

ShelterBox USA

Stimson Center (Global Governance, Justice & Security Program)

Tanenbaum

The Alliance for Middle East Peace

The Borgen Project

The Bridgeway Group

The Carter Center

The DC Student Consortium on Women, Peace, and Security

The Fund for Peace

The HALO Trust

The National Association for Community Mediation

The Youth Cafe

UN Association of the National Capital Area

Women of Color Advancing Peace, Security, and Conflict Transformation

Y Coalition, Bangladesh

Yemeni Youth Forum for Peace

Young Adult Empowerment Initiative (YEI)

Youth Initiative Against Violence & Human Rights Abuse-YIAVHA

CC:

Amb. Samantha Power, USAID Administrator Designate
Senator Robert Menendez, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Senator James Risch, Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Congressman Gregory Meeks, House Foreign Affairs Committee
Congressman Michael McCaul, House Foreign Affairs Committee