

News

Opinion

Realty

Money

Culture

Jewish

Travel

Activism

Shop

עברית

TV
Campaign

Erekat talks to Israelis Photo: Kfir Sivan/Israel Sun

Artificial peace messages

Op-ed: Israeli desire for peace genuine, no need for clumsy advertising campaign funded by US

Gerald Steinberg

Published: 09.01.10, 00:14 / [Israel Opinion](#)

share



After failing for 18 months to reverse the results of the 2009 Israeli election that brought a coalition headed by [Benjamin Netanyahu](#) to power, the Obama administration appeared to have stopped the clumsy efforts to manipulate Israeli democracy. But now the US Agency for International Development (USAID) is using a small opposition group to sell artificial peace messages to Israelis.

This US-sponsored campaign is based on political advertisements with the message "that there is a (Palestinian) partner, that the problem is specifically with us." The texts are prepared by a group calling itself the "Geneva Initiative," and include video clips of Palestinian officials telling Israelis that there is a "window of opportunity" for reaching a peace agreement. USAID is also funding a parallel campaign aimed at a Palestinian audience.

In December 2003, amidst the mass terror campaign that followed the Oslo "peace process," the Geneva Initiative began to promote its peace plan, using funding provided by Swiss politicians with no understanding of the Middle East. While most of the Israelis involved were opposition figures

(including Yossi Beilin), the Palestinians were all linked to the Fatah organization, which was still controlled by Arafat.

Dubbed "Oslo 2", the substance of the proposed agreement was


Peace Campaign

Shalom, Saeb Erekat here / Alon Goldstein

Without checkpoints, without sirens, and in a different time zone. Welcome to Ramallah, PA's Tel Aviv. From here, via short clips and large posters, Palestinian leaders try to convince Israeli public there is a partner for peace. Behind-the-scenes visit to Mideast's most optimistic campaign


[Full Story](#)





**ONLINE
MASTER
DEGREES**

100% ONLINE
100% SUPPORTED
100% OPPORTUNITY



LEARN MORE NOW

Ads by Google 

[Nuclear Power](#)

ANS Meeting --
Nuclear Power:
Crafting Energy
Solutions
www.ans.org

[Micro-Radiation Sensor](#)

Economical,
Sensitive, Instant
Nuclear & Dirty
Bomb Indication
Device
k8community.com

[Hotels in Israel](#)

Book a hotel in
Israel online. All
hotels with special
offers.
www.booking.com/Hotels

[EDS Security Systems](#)

Jerusalem's
Leading Alarm
Company 1 800 A
L A R M S :- 02
678 1627
www.eds-systems.com

also problematic, including very weak security provisions and a highly ambiguous framework for dealing with Palestinian refugee claims. As a result of the terms and the catastrophic experience with Oslo, this initiative had no traction. Nevertheless, the efforts to sell the framework have continued, but foreign government funding has not contributed to public acceptance.

Similarly, the USAID campaign is particularly ill-advised, and is likely to lead to results which are the opposite of the intended objectives. The Israeli desire for peace after 62 years of conflict and rejectionism is genuine, and there is no need for a clumsy advertising campaign. After Sadat accepted Begin's invitation to visit Israel in November 1977, the US did not need staged video clips in order to sell peace with Egypt to the Israeli public.

Peace requires halt to demonization

Instead, Israelis need to see an end to the Palestinian media incitement against Israel and the denial of the legitimacy of Jewish national self-determination. In addition, peace requires a halt to demonization through apartheid rhetoric, discriminatory boycotts, and calls for the UN and the International Criminal Court to open "war crimes" cases against Israeli officials. A few staged Palestinian pronouncements on peace made in English and funded by the US will not erase this behavior.

Indeed, the impact of the USAID-funded advertising is likely to be counterproductive, and add to Israeli doubts and concerns. Polls show that the Israeli public is tired of the political manipulation that, until now, has been engineered primarily by European governments, under the guise of "civil society" and non-governmental organizations. Most of these efforts are highly guarded secrets, with no information on the processes by which a few marginal figures get large amounts of money to oppose the policies of the elected Israeli government. Such direct interference by one democratic country in the internal affairs of other democracies is also a blatant violation of international norms – but these rules are ignored when it comes to Israel.

Following the negative European precedent, the USAID website makes no mention of this political campaign. The absence of full public disclosure or Congressional oversight for this unusual venture is also exceptional. To their credit, the leaders of the Geneva Initiative acknowledged that "The campaign is supported with the generous support of the American people through USAID."

But in other ways, the behavior of the Geneva Initiative highlights

the problem of secret foreign manipulation. They are funded via an organization known as H.L. Education for Peace, which is not registered with the Israeli government's Non-profit Registrar. In this way, the NGO evades reporting requirements regarding the large-scale support received from the European Union, Switzerland and other governments.

The issues of political manipulation and secret funding processes used by foreign governments are at the core of the draft legislation recently approved by the Knesset's Constitution, Law and Justice Committee. The "Disclosure Requirements for (Groups) Supported by Foreign Government Funding" bill will require groups that receive such funding for a specific advertising campaign to acknowledge that support within the framework of the campaign. (The New Israel Fund and allied NGOs have wrongly denounced this clause as anti-democratic, a position that protects the partisan NGO recipients and leaves the Israeli public in the dark.)

If there is a real prospect for a workable peace agreement, Israelis do not need to be persuaded by secret funding for false advertising – including the absurd claim that 62 years of war, terror and rejection is "our fault." These difficult decisions need to be based on detailed debate within the context of Israeli democracy. If Israelis are convinced that this time, there is a real basis for peace, and the benefits outweigh the risks, they will act accordingly. And if the incitement and terror continue, more NGO advertising will make no difference.

Prof. Gerald Steinberg, Political Science, Bar Ilan University and president, [NGO Monitor](#)

Recommend

44 people recommend this. Be the first of your friends.



talkback



Print

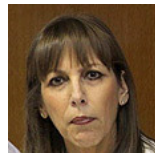


Send to friend



Bookmark to del.icio.us

See More



Mixing art and politics



The price of arrogance

[Apply to 1800 Intnl. Jobs](#)

Health, Aid, Edu, Rural, NRM jobs 1500 Jobs Filled, 13,000 Recruiters
devnetjobs.tripod.com

[? סוכרת, כולסטרול, לחץ דם](#)

גלה עוד היום האם גם אתה נמצא באחת מקבוצות הסיכון לאירוע לב!
CardioCare.co.il

[10M\\$ For Israeli Hostages](#)

10M\$ Reward For Israeli MIA's. Find More Information Here !
www.10million.org

[Helicopter Tour in Israel](#)

One of a kind VIP Helicopter tours The most experienced Co. in Israel
www.cnairways.com

Ads by Google


24 Talkbacks for this article

See all talkbacks

1. PA real intentions made clear last night
Ilan, Ariel (09.01.10)
2. Calling a crime a crime is not a crime
Steve Benassi, Silver Bay, MN USA (09.01.10)
3. If Obama cannot come through the front door, he'll force his
Harry Wright, UK (09.01.10)
4. Obama attempting to label Israelis the obstacle to peace
RB, USA (09.01.10)
5. USAID and CIA
Ralph Levy, USA (09.01.10)
6. Mr. Hutzpa ,...
split, USA (09.01.10)
7. **The essence of the Muslim-Arab conflict with Israel**
Jehudah Ben-Israel, Qatzrin, Israel (09.01.10)
8. To #6 & Ynetnews
Tom W., Windsor, Canada (09.01.10)
9. More clumsy propaganda.
Terry, Eilat - Israel (09.01.10)
10. No. 6
(09.01.10)
11. You're rightit is a ridiculous idea !
Salma, Palestine (09.01.10)
12. To Split
Carl (09.01.10)
13. To all the Split's (post #6) of the world
Tom W., Windsor, Canada (09.01.10)
14. #12 - "aid" consists of funds that must be spent on US arms
split, usa (09.01.10)
15. #2 A Crime..., #14 Aid...
Solomon, Bklyn (09.01.10)
16. Salma
yaakov, jerusalem (09.01.10)
17. #14 Split, I'm more than happy...
Yossi G., Jerusalem (09.01.10)
18. Security brings peace
BH, Iowa (09.01.10)
19. # 15 - You should read the link posted in #13.
split, USA (09.01.10)
20. 17. #14 Split, I'm more than happy..
split, usa (09.01.10)
21. Israelis should invest in anti-Obama ads for the midterms.
Chaim, Israel (09.01.10)
22. they are dead
samira, gaza (09.02.10)
23. The world & Jews seem to like ghettos
Realitycheck, Jerusalem Israel (09.02.10)
24. Some people are never happy
Ariel, NYC/Jerusalem (09.03.10)

 [RSS](#) | [About](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Terms of use](#) | [Advertise with us](#)

Site developed by [realcommerce](#) Search Engine Marketing by [@gentinteractive](#)

 Copyright © Yedioth Internet. All rights reserved.