Written Evidence Submitted by The Abraham Fund Initiatives

Executive Summary
The Abraham Fund Initiatives advocates for larger investment in the Conflict Pool and greater awareness of Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority as a potential recipient of the conflict pool.

Redistribution of funding towards Conflict Pool
- With a greater allocation of resources the conflict pool has the potential to be a highly impactful tool in preparing our societies for embracing a peace process. As the peace process is a top-down process, with a handful of political leaders meeting behind closed doors, there is a need for a parallel bottom-up process. The Abraham Fund Initiatives views the future of a democratic, vibrant Israel as dependent on equality and inclusion of Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority. A direct effect of achieving these aims will be a greater ability to interact and build civil society initiatives with neighboring States.

- The current UK aid distribution focuses on improving the lives of Palestinians and institution building within the future state of Palestine. However one fifth of Israeli citizens are Arab-Palestinian as well, this population is an equally worthy beneficiary of these grants. Furthermore there is an impressive track record that such investment returns a high level of social change and impact on institutional structures.

1) Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority effected by the conflict and as a potential cultural bridge
The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex, 67% of Israel’s Arab citizen population define themselves as ethnically Palestinian, yet only 23% of Israeli Palestinians desire to live in a Palestinian state. While there is understandably much sympathy for the Palestinian cause among Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority there has never been significant violent conflict, and the leadership has always maintained a restrained and moderate policy towards the conflict. Alongside identification with the Palestinian people and its struggle, Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority’s complex identity has evolved over the years, creating a unique and distinct group that views itself as having a different fate from its brethren in the territories. That being said, Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority is often a causality of the tensions of the conflict. There is a direct link between escalation of violence in the conflict and increased discrimination towards Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority. The conflict is used regularly to create barriers for better inclusion and equality for Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority. For instance, a de-legitimation of the Arab leadership in the public discourse started after the Oslo agreements, accepted by the Knesset and supported by the "obstructing bloc" of the Arab parties standing by the second Rabin administration (outside of the coalition). The agreements were the first insignia for attempts from parts of the Israeli right wing parties to prevent a political unity between Jews and Arabs. In this spirit, a united message widely ingrained by the Jewish leadership into the minds of their constituents states that decisions in all areas of society and especially in political spheres, should be made by a Jewish majority thus insinuating that the Arab leadership is relevant for participating in the decision making process. This stance has effectively influenced all age groups in Israeli Jewish society: the democracy measure of 2011 found that 77.8% of the Jewish public believes that crucial decisions regarding peace and security should be made within a Jewish majority, and about 70% believe that the same goes for socio-economic decisions. The Abraham Fund Initiatives aims to challenge these widely held convictions and increase the participation of Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority in public life.

This entrenched perception within Jewish Israeli political society of Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority as an internal threat has led to a political status quo of isolation. Israeli-Arab political parties hold pariah status in the Israeli Knesset and the Arab voice is delegitimized at every turn. Through fighting these perceptions and increasing Arab political participation in the Israeli public sphere, The Abraham Fund Initiatives is not only creating a healthier democracy, but creating the foundations for a healthy reconciliation framework. As the inclusion of an Arab voice at every level of the decision making process will only be beneficial in normalizing relations in a post-conflict treaty era.

Projects, spearheaded by the Abraham Fund Initiatives, in the realm of Police-Arab relations and Home Front Command-Arab relations have significantly impacted on the way in which these security-focused executive branches of government, dealing with civil issues, relate to the Palestinian minority in Israel. Institutionalizing a perception of equal citizenship successfully humanizes "the other" and has far reaching positive implications in other institutional settings.

The Abraham Fund’s initiatives in the fields of education, policing services, economic development and Arab women’s employment have fundamentally transformed Jewish-Arab relations by responding to the underlying challenges in Israeli domestic policies and legislation. These significant challenges will be relevant topics for action even after the Israeli-Palestinian

---

1 Smooha poll
conflict has been settled, The Abraham Fund is constantly preparing the ground for a long-term ability to respond and initiate in this field.

Redistribution of UK Funds

Currently the UK government invests £90 million in building towards a Peaceful solution between Israel and the Palestinian territories. However, only £4 million of the overall budget is allocated towards the Conflict Pool in Israel and the Palestinian territories. While the Occupied Palestinian Territories needs aid to help with its economic growth, this only achieves part of the UK’s goal of working towards a two-state solution. However, the priority of creating "a secure Israel alongside a future Palestinian State" should also be viewed through the prism of healthy civil society and the advancement of equality and integration for the Palestinian minority in Israel.

2. Refocusing resources on Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority

2.1) Currently Palestinians are defined in the Conflict Pool as living within the West Bank or Gaza. While this definition is correct in regard to the status of citizenship, it would be beneficial to recognize Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority as a population deserving of attention (as despite the fact that they are Israeli by citizenship, they are also Palestinian by nationality and ethnicity); and that models developed for their inclusion, equality and socio-economic betterment, are strengthening Israel's democracy and could act as transferrable experiences for future relations between Israel and neighboring countries. The Arab-Palestinian minority in Israel faces major obstacles in employment and education, they are victim to unequal distribution of resources and unequal employment opportunities.

2.2) Examples of challenges facing Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority:

- **Education:** Arab schools in Israel lack the same funding as the Jewish schools. An August 2009 study by Hebrew University showed that the average per-student allocation at Arab junior high schools was one fifth of their Jewish peers.²

- **Leadership:** Not only under-represented in Israel’s Knesset, the Palestinian minority in Israel feels distrustful and badly represented by the leadership that they do have: 58.2% do not trust Arab leaders in Israel: 63.2% think they do not serve the Arab population in advancing

solutions to its problems. This is not solely politically fatigue but linked to the exclusionary
and divisive tactics of the major Zionist political parties.

- **Poverty**: As of 2010 53% of Arab Israeli families lived below the "poverty-line", in
  comparison to 14.3% of Jewish families highlighting the stark economic disparity between
  Jewish and Palestinian Israelis.

- **Gender**: An exceedingly high percentage of women in Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority are
  unemployed. The Abraham Fund Initiatives has implemented employment projects,
  subsequently adopted by the Government, to counter this trend and work towards a more
  gender inclusive workforce and public sphere.

3. **Necessity of equality between Arab and Jewish citizens within Israel, as a foundation for
   civil dialogue**

3.1) There exists a dilemma for foreign governments interested in catalyzing peace and dialogue
   in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict: institutional capacity building often yields palpable results, yet
   does not necessarily advance the capacity for peace; while people-to-people dialogue projects
directly connect individuals in grass roots dialogue, yet rarely have institution-changing capacity
or yield much more than short term perception changes that are almost impossible to measure.
The Abraham Fund Initiatives, creates implementable projects which both create trust and
discussions between Arab-Palestinians and Jewish citizens of Israel, and also leave a measurable
impact on institutional structures. One of the primary foci is elevating the economic and social
status of Arabs in Israel, as in order to have true dialogue there needs to be a foundation of true
equality. In addition, as the ICAI states that prevention is better than a cure, the Abraham Fund
Initiatives is one of the few NGOs in Israel who are trusted by both parties, bridging
Government-Arab-Palestinian minority relations and creating viable solutions for deep
challenges, thus taking responsibility for a situation that if ignored will only fall more deeply into
conflict.

3.2) According to a KAS Poll in 2013, 62% of Israelis and 53% of Palestinians support a two-state
solution. These polls clearly demonstrate that there is support on both sides for peace
negotiations. The problem therefore lies in the ability for the sides to talk and find a common
ground. If included in the Israeli decision making process Israel's Arab-Palestinian minority will
be able to convey this common ground and represent the State of Israel in foreign relations with
Arab States.

---

3 Smooha poll
4. Background of Abraham Fund Initiatives

4.1) The Abraham Fund is focused on those public policy and institutional changes required in order to create an inclusive, just, prosperous and secure Israeli society. This going-forward strategy – described as "advocacy through action" – is based on an understanding that The Abraham Fund’s program initiatives serve as working models rather than ends in themselves; laboratory tools and incubators in service of advancing an agenda of inclusive public policies and institutional reforms. These program incubators allow the organization to develop, test and evaluate new concepts and methodologies; to use the acquired knowledge to construct best-practice models suitable for replication; and to build the credibility and partnerships with government, civil society and the private sector required to bring these efforts to scale.

5. Abraham Fund Initiatives projects within Israel dealing with Israeli Arab-Palestinian citizens

5.1) Police-Arab Relations

Abraham Fund Initiatives introduced community policing in Arab villages, a project that meets the BSOS goals of “Effective and accountable security and justice” and “the capacity of populations and regional and multilateral institutions to prevent and resolve conflict.”

Unequal policing has manifested itself in the disproportionate violent reaction in the October 2000 riots ("over-policing"), and also in neglect that damages the everyday lives of these citizens and forces them to live in the shadow of rising crime ("under-policing"). Both de-facto policies show the inability for the Israeli police force to adequately relate to the Palestinian minority as a service receiver. Due to the distrust towards the police many Arab communities in Israel remain unprotected, only further exasperating the vicious cycle of distrust and anger.

The Abraham Fund Initiatives’ police program gives communities an opportunity to help shape police strategies and define its priorities. It is based on models which were imported from Washington DC, Los Angeles, and Northern Ireland that dealt with police interaction with the minority group. Trips facilitated for the Israeli police to these areas inspired them to request roundtable discussions between the police force and the Arab minority in Israel. These roundtables will include local Arab leaders and police representatives and allow Palestinians in Israel to take an active role in defining the agenda and working as a partner with the Police.

5.2) Education

Abraham Fund Initiatives created “Ya Salam”, an initiative that creates a more positive image of Arabs and the Arabic language from a young age. This initiative requires Arabic language and culture to be taught in Jewish primary schools by Arab teachers. This program has been
implemented in over 200 schools and is mandatory by the Ministry of Education in the Northern Haifa district. The dimensions of this project are multi-fold. It provides the Jewish public with a more positive image of Arabs. In around half the survey questions pertaining to attitudes towards Arabs, program graduates had a more positive response than those who had not participate. In addition to exposing Jewish children to Arabs at a young age, the program also provides job opportunities for a population group that suffers high unemployment: Arab females.

5.3) Employment

Women among Israel’s Arab-Palestinian minority are disproportionately unemployed. The Abraham Fund Initiatives created Sharikat haya (“Partners for Life” in Arabic), a program that provides 300 hours of training to Arab females and following the training assists them in finding a job. This program has been a success, with 70% of graduates entering the Israeli workplace. Sharikat Haya has impacted women’s status within Arab society, as well as helping to narrow the economic gap by giving parents the opportunity to bring two incomes into the household. Additionally, Arabs entering the Israeli workplace creates more interaction between Jews and Arabs which allows most positive perceptions on both sides. This can be demonstrated by Arab women being willing to work in Jewish sector and Jewish businesses hiring Arab workers.

Sharikat haya also serves as an example of how to transition from a pilot program to a government program. In 2013, the Ministry of Industry, Trade and Labor announced that it would initiate an Arab women’s employment program in more than 50 new towns across Israel based on the Sharikat Haya model.

5.4) Leadership Initiative

The Abraham Fund Initiatives’ newest venture, the Leadership Initiative, directly relates to creating an inclusive political system, which is based on a fair representation of the Arab-Palestinian minority. After observing a declining voting rate among Arab Israelis, several programs have been created to increase the representation of women and youth in Arab leadership and teach potential Arab leaders different aspects of the Israeli political system and campaigning. The true test of a democracy is whether the minority feels that their vote has influence in politics, and as Israel stands right now there is much to be improved on. Training the Arab public to become more involved and engaged in the Israeli political and public realms provides an additional support to the Israeli pro-peace voice.

The Abraham Fund Initiatives has successful finished a pilot program, and is planning on training hundreds of potential leaders in a strictly non-partisan manner or affiliation.

6. Recommendations:
The guidelines of BSOS state that the Conflict Pool should have a larger focus on long-term solutions and strategy development. The Abraham Fund Initiatives serves to address the underlying problems of Arab-Jewish relations, and build institutions that resolve them by incorporating grassroots and government interaction. This allows for the programs to be sustainable, as well as more easily monitored and evaluated.

We suggest that:

i. Increasing the budgetary allocation of the Conflict Pool will enable the UK government to create high-impact and measureable initiatives within civil society.

ii. Broadening the definition of "Palestinian" to include Israeli Arab-Palestinian citizens, not only mirrors this population's own ethnic self-identification, but opens the door to initiatives that will have a far-reaching effect on civil society within Israel and across the region.