



## Monthly Update

March 31, 2017

Dear friends and supporters,

I am pleased to report that our Center has received a generous **\$35,000 matching grant to help maintain our current reach in light of looming government cutbacks**, and we would like you to partner with us in doing so.

As you well know, our mission is to bridge religious considerations with the practice of international politics in support of peacemaking. For the 18 years of ICRD's existence, it has pursued this mission to good effect in a range of hotspots, including Sudan, Kashmir, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Yemen, Tunisia, Morocco, Colombia and Saudi Arabia.

With the advent of the new Administration and its proposed **cuts in foreign aid and State Department funding**, ICRD should be in a growth industry, as the national instruments for achieving diplomatic solutions lose their sharpness. About six years ago, the State Department began recognizing ICRD's unique capabilities and started funding our work with madrasa leaders in Pakistan to transform the curriculums and pedagogy of their religious schools in order to create critical thinking skills and promote greater adherence to human rights and religious tolerance.

Although we have already seen some cutbacks in State Department funding, we remain hopeful that additional government support will be provided for the madrasa reform work and for our efforts to facilitate educational reform in Saudi Arabia. The latter possibility was enhanced last week by a personal request from the Saudi Foreign Minister to Secretary Tillerson that the State Department continue its support for ICRD's involvement. (The Minister recognized that Saudi funding would undermine the credibility of our efforts, hence his appeal to the Secretary of State). Although we have already spent five years on this project, there is still a great deal to do before all of the inflammatory content in the public school textbooks and teacher training materials that has been inspiring ISIS, Al Qaeda, and other extremist groups has been fully removed.

The overriding hope that inspires our work is that it will help **minimize the instances in which our children or grandchildren have to be sent in harm's way**. Although it is gratifying that the State Department appreciates our ability to work in difficult spaces where others cannot, we need private funding to bridge the already widening gap in government funding as we seek to maintain our effectiveness in an increasingly polarized and conflicted world.

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**Please consider partnering with us in meeting the match.**

With best wishes,



Douglas Johnston

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