

The Israeli-Palestinian Federal Forum

The Israeli-Palestinian Federal Forum has gathered together Israelis, Palestinians, and international supporters who see federalist frameworks as the most realistic and feasible approach for a just, sustainable, equitable, and democratic resolution to our conflict.

This document will both explain what federalism entails and why it is suited to the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The conflict centers on two peoples who lay claim to the same land - the Jewish people who call it the Land of Israel, and the Palestinian people who call it Palestine, as well as a number of important minority groups. If that land were to be cut into two, neither would fulfil their aspirations. Jaffa, Haifa and Akko are very important to Palestinians, Jews see Hebron, Bethlehem and Nablus as an essential part of their biblical heritage, and Jerusalem is cherished by all.

Under such circumstances, resolving the conflict might ideally have the two peoples sharing the land they each see as their ancestral homeland. However, both peoples cherish their identities and cultures and are determined to retain them. We need a way for them to live in the same land, and still embrace and safeguard their mosaic of cultural identities.

In other lands where peoples have become intermingled, frameworks have been developed to embrace diversity within unity through federal governance systems. Some 40% of the world's population benefits from a variety of federal mechanisms. Federalism allows regional governments to operate autonomously within a federal framework, with powers divided among them and tailored to local needs.

Federal government mechanisms have been successfully implemented by many of the most important countries in the world, including the USA, Canada, Brazil, India, the UAE, Australia, and many members of the European Union, which is also itself a federal structure. Smaller examples such as Switzerland and Belgium can even be meaningfully compared to Israel/Palestine in terms of physical size, population, complexity, and language diversity.

For Palestinians and Israeli Jews, a federal/confederal system would be a hybrid of two states and one state, offering the best of both worlds, with the two peoples sharing mutually beneficial resources, while also enjoying self-governance.

The Holy Land is also of crucial importance to the great Abrahamic faiths. Federalism would ensure a place for them all, with guaranteed freedom of worship. Multifaith harmony could turn the heart of the conflict into the heart of the solution.

The Abraham Accords have opened many new doors across the Middle East, but they will not be able to achieve their full potential without a meaningful reconciliation with the Palestinians. A federal solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would be a game-changer for the Abraham Accords process, building a solid foundation of real acceptance and partnership to propel them to new heights.

By pulling together rather than against one another, Palestinians and Israelis would become complementary instead of contradictory. They already have deeply interwoven economies and shared ecosystems.

Federalism offers a viable framework for transforming this reality into a sustainable shared future, with democratic civil rights and self-determination for all. It would embrace the needs of all parties, replacing violent rivalry with mutual benefit.

Trust is built by working together on common aims, for shared responsibility, mutual recognition, collective prosperity, and security for all. The federal system would guarantee freedom for everyone to work, travel, and worship anywhere from the river to the sea, with equal rights under law, and reconciliation built into all educational systems.

Federalism for the Holy Land is not a new idea: in 1947, the UN did consider a federal alternative to Resolution 181, which itself called for two states in an economic union, an idea that was reiterated in Israel's Declaration of Independence¹.

In 1991, renowned federalist thinker Daniel Elazar published a book named 'Two Peoples, One Land', listing eleven potential ways for federalism to be implemented. These concepts have recently been developed by our members into several detailed workable plans.

The following ten principles are key values shared by the members of the Israeli-Palestinian Federal Forum. If they speak to you as well, please [join us](#) and become a member of our growing movement. You will find details of our plans on our [website](#).

¹ Over the years, many great thinkers have discussed similar ideas, including Judah Magnes and Sari Nusseibeh

Federal Forum Guiding Principles

We believe that:

1. Federalism is the optimal system of government for a just, sustainable, equitable, and democratic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Federal systems around the world take various forms to match local circumstances and cultures.
2. The whole land, between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, is inhabited by diverse cultural communities, including two major groups: the Palestinian people and the Israeli Jewish people.
3. A federal solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict enables both peoples to enjoy self-determination, autonomy, security, and cooperation, with the benefit of interdependent economies.
4. Both peoples hold a deep and unbreakable connection to the whole land. Both see it as their ancestral historical, cultural, religious, and national homeland, of vital importance to their brothers and sisters in the Diaspora.
5. Both peoples should be able to implement their right of self-determination within one shared historical, religious, and cultural homeland.
6. We understand that in reality, both peoples are increasingly interconnected and intertwined economically, in terms of infrastructure and ecosystems.
7. Both peoples include diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious communities. In a federal framework, these diverse communities throughout the land can enrich each other and can benefit from cooperation, while preserving their distinct identities.
8. We seek a creative paradigm to design a win-win solution for the benefit of all, that finds a balance between our needs for autonomy, security, cooperation, connection, and shared responsibility for the land.

9. Federalism will recognize and protect minority cultures, providing equal opportunities and security for all.
10. In order to sustain the resulting Federal Framework, we seek to acknowledge both peoples' struggles and build a shared future founded on trust, justice and reconciliation.

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