



The Middle East Partnership Initiative

Strengthening Democratic Politics

"We stand for democracy not because we want other countries to be like us, but because we want all people to enjoy the consistent protection of the rights that are naturally theirs, whether they were born in Tallahassee or Tehran. Democracy has proven the best political system for making human rights a human reality over the long term."

Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton - December 14, 2009

MEPI helps build democratic institutions and facilitate the civic activism that are essential to accountable, representative government. MEPI projects inspire and empower citizens to help shape the decisions that impact their daily lives.

In the 21st century, capable, reliable, and transparent institutions are the key to success: strong parliaments; honest police forces; independent judges; an independent press; a vibrant private sector; a civil society. Those are the things that give life to democracy, because that is what matters in people's everyday lives."

President Barack Obama - July 11, 2009

PROMOTING THE DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

MEPI encourages vibrant electoral politics by training parties and candidates, with a special emphasis on bringing women candidates and campaigners into the process. MEPI partners monitor elections and train election observers to support a free, fair, and transparent process. Local NGOs use MEPI support to encourage voter registration, educate voters, and promote public participation in politics.

SUPPORTING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS

MEPI works to bring citizens and government into closer engagement. MEPI programs train national legislatures in bill drafting, legislative research, budget analysis, constituent outreach, and media relations. Working with political parties, MEPI partners develop their skills in building grassroots support and developing constituent services. MEPI helps foster effective dialogue between civil society and government on how to solve tough social problems.

ENGAGING CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society's central role in democracy makes it a central focus of MEPI's efforts across the region. MEPI promotes freedom of association so citizens can organize, assemble, debate and advocate their views. MEPI support — through direct grants, networking and capacity building projects — strengthens the active citizens who serve as the region's most dedicated and successful agents of change. Focusing on local organizations and grassroots initiatives, MEPI is laying the groundwork for sustainable, locally-driven political reform and democratic governance.

Strengthening Democratic Politics - MEPI in Action



Lebanon – After the assassination of former Prime Minister Rafik Hariri and the popular uprising that ousted Syrian forces from Lebanon in 2005, MEPI mobilized U.S.-based and Lebanese organizations to help Lebanon prepare for

independent parliamentary elections. Since then, MEPI has helped local civic groups work together across sectarian lines, improve electoral laws, and press for government transparency. MEPI also supported civic groups engaged in the 2009 parliamentary elections.

Egypt – MEPI's 2009 Egypt Local Grants Program is supporting startup, independent civic groups during a crucial election year. These projects support independent media, educate youth on their civic roles and responsibilities, and bolster human rights monitoring and advocacy. In 2005, MEPI worked with the Independent Committee for Election Monitoring (ICEM), a coalition of Egyptian NGOs under the leadership of the Ibn Khaldun Center, to field over 5,000 election observers nationwide.

Yemen – MEPI's efforts in Yemen increase the capacity of civil society organizations to inform and influence policy debates. The Yemen Polling Center (YPC), founded in 2005, is one of the first polling centers in the country. Using MEPI funds, YPC has conducted public attitude surveys, focus groups, demographic studies, economic surveys and market research for the development of both the public and private sectors in the country.

Kuwait – MEPI is a leading supporter of the fight for women's political empowerment in Kuwait, through campaign schools, civic education, and get-out-the-vote efforts. The May 2009 Parliamentary elections resulted in the unprecedented victory of four women, each of whom had participated in MEPI programs previously.



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For more information, visit MEPI at www.mepi.state.gov and our regional offices in Abu Dhabi and Tunis at

www.abudhabi.mepi.state.gov and www.medregion.mepi.state.gov.

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