



For Immediate release:

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Middle East expert to speak at World Affairs Council symposium in Portland

Portland, Maine - No region of the world has retained the fascination of Americans during the past twenty years as has the Middle East. The region is a complex amalgamation of sects and states, where wounds a thousand years old are still raw and where people identify as belonging to a religious sect before a country. Most of us will never understand what is really happening in the Middle East, but some people have devoted their lives to dissecting the region and its complexities.

One man is Aaron David Miller, who will be the keynote speaker at the World Affairs Council of Maine's annual educational symposium in honor of Seeds of Peace, this year's recipient of the World Affairs Council of Maine's International Leadership Award. This year's symposium, "Peace in the Middle East: Fact, Fiction, or Fantasy," will take place June 25th at the Holiday Inn by the Bay in Portland.

Miller, a public policy fellow at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, has helped formulate U.S. policy on the Middle East and the Arab-Israeli peace process over the last two decades as an adviser to six secretaries of state. He was present at virtually every negotiation involving the United States and Middle East power brokers between 1988 and 2004. He is also the author of *The Much Too Promised Land: America's Elusive Search for Arab-Israeli Peace*, a unique analysis chock full of his personal experiences during two decades of participating in America's efforts to help achieve peace in the Middle East.

The symposium is in honor of Seeds of Peace, the recipient of the World Affairs Council of Maine's 2009 International Leadership Award. The award was established by the council to honor the achievements of an individual or organization from Maine or with Maine ties who has demonstrated outstanding leadership in the global arena. The 2008 winner of the award was Senator George Mitchell.

Seeds of Peace epitomizes the best Maine has to offer to a global community dealing with ethnic and cultural clashes, according to John LaBrie, executive director of the World Affairs Council of Maine. "Seeds of Peace is an outstanding organization that has been focused on the peaceful resolution of conflict for over a decade and their model should be emulated and celebrated. For Maine, this is yet another amazing example of how our state has a disproportionate influence on a global map."

Middle East expert to speak at WAC symposium (cont.)

Seeds of Peace began in the pristine woods of Maine as the Seeds of Peace International Camp, established in 1993 by journalist John Wallach to bring together young leaders from conflict-torn regions around the world. From its first year, when it brought together 46 Israeli, Palestinian and Egyptian teenagers, the organization has expanded to include young leaders from South Asia, Cyprus and the Balkans. Its leadership network now encompasses nearly 4,000 young people from several major conflict regions. Currently, the organization is actively working in the Middle East and South Asia.

In his keynote address, Miller will discuss the current state of negotiations in the Middle East. Using his book as a point of departure, he will also incorporate his views on how the new Obama administration will influence the peace process.

The symposium will begin at 8:30 a.m. and will be followed by an Awards Luncheon at 12:30 p.m. on June 25th at the Holiday Inn by the Bay. Cost of the symposium and luncheon is \$100 per person. For ticket information, please call 780-4551 or visit the World Affairs Council website at www.wacmaine.org.

For additional information contact:

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The World Affairs Council of Maine is a nonprofit, nonpartisan public membership organization dedicated to bringing issues of international importance into focus through the presentation of world leaders and opinion makers at its public programs, business briefings, schools and special events.

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