Q: Why does ATFP speak with Jews, Israelis and Zionists?

A: From its outset, ATFP has understood that, in order to pursue its mission, building dialogue and, wherever possible, constructive working relationships with crucial players on all sides is essential. ATFP, from its outset, has been clear that while it categorically opposes the occupation that began in 1967, it does not oppose the State of Israel. Based on this fundamental premise, from its founding, the Task Force has publicly and openly stated that it meets and deals with all relevant players -- including Israelis, Israeli officials, and their Jewish-American supporters -- in order to advance its mission. ATFP engages openly with Israel and Israeli officials, for the express, clear and unapologetic purpose of pursuing its policy goals in an effective, open and transparent manner.

From its earliest days, ATFP understood that in order to achieve its aim of ending the occupation and creating a Palestinian state alongside Israel, it had to attempt to build the widest possible coalition. This includes not only Arab-American organizations, but also other interested groups including Christian, foreign policy, and international relations oriented organizations, and, especially, mainstream Jewish-American institutions and individuals.

ATFP has, for years, been openly calling for the widest possible coalition in favor of a two-state solution. The two populations in the United States most invested in the Israeli-Palestinian issue are Arab Americans and Jewish Americans. ATFP has argued that, albeit for different reasons and based on different narratives and affiliations, Arab Americans on behalf of Palestine and Jewish Americans on behalf of Israel both have a pressing interest in a two-state solution. ATFP has further argued that, because they either already share, or should share, this common goal, Arab and Jewish American groups should lead an even broader coalition in support of ending the occupation and establishing a Palestinian state to live alongside Israel in peace, security and dignity. This has meant seeking dialogue and points of convergence with Jewish-American groups across the mainstream political spectrum.

ATFP has also understood from its inception that dialogue with Israelis, including Israeli officials, is essential for working to help achieve not only a two-state solution but also positive,
tangible and measurable improvements in the daily lives of Palestinians on the ground. As noted in the "accomplishments" section of this FAQ, although it is not a charitable or development organization but a policy advocacy group, ATFP has been involved in considerable efforts to help Palestinians develop their society and provide much-needed public and private aid.

All of this work, as well as much of its policy advocacy efforts, necessarily involve building working relations with Israeli government officials, as well as those in the Palestinian Authority, Arab states and here at home in the United States. Early in the organization's history, a 10-member ATFP delegation embarked on an eight-day tour of the Middle East from December 8-16, 2006. This visit involved substantive meetings with top political leaders including Jordan’s King Abdullah II, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, and Israel's Foreign Minister and Acting Prime Minister Tzipi Livni. The Palestinian-American board members of ATFP held candid and thorough discussions with these and other high-ranking government officials in the region. This early, high-level outreach set the stage for the development of even deeper and more sustained engagement as the organization developed and grew.