

Middle East WMD-Free Zone

A briefing by **BASIC**

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Objective¹

A WMDFZ would commit participants not to possess, acquire, test, manufacture, deploy or use any biological, chemical and nuclear weapons as well as their associated delivery vehicles, as outlined under the 1995 Non-Proliferation Treaty Review Conference Middle East Resolution.

Recent developments

2011 – The regional conference on the establishment of a WMDFZ in the Middle East was agreed to be held in Helsinki in December 2012, with the co-sponsors being the U.S., UK, Russia and the UN Secretary General, and the designated facilitator was Finnish Undersecretary of State Jaakko Laajava.

November 2012 – The meeting was postponed indefinitely, the U.S. citing “present conditions in the Middle East” and the lack of agreement by participating states on “acceptable conditions”. An effort by the Facilitator to convene informal consultations in Geneva failed to attract support from the Arab League.

April 2013 – Egypt walks out of the NPT preparatory committee meeting in Geneva in protest at the postponement of the Helsinki conference.

October 2013 – Saudi Arabia rejects UN Security Council seat membership - citing the recent impasse over the Syria conflict as well as the lack of progress on a move towards banning WMDs in the Middle East.

October & November 2013 – Informal consultations occur in Glion, Switzerland, with diplomats from Israel, Iran and Arab States participating.

November 2013 – Arab League unanimously agrees to “support” elements of Egypt’s initiative made in speech by Foreign Minister Nabil Fahmy at a speech at the UN in September on furthering the Middle East WMD-free zone.^{4,5}

November 2013 – Five nuclear weapon states (NWS) and Germany, reach agreement with Iran to suspend its nuclear enrichment program for six months. This includes suspending activities at the Arak ‘heavy water’ reactor site.

May 2014 – The Arab Group, while at the NPT PrepCom, threatens to reconsider its position toward the indefinite extension of the Treaty if the Helsinki conference is not convened.

May & June 2014 – Informal consultations continue in Geneva, Switzerland with diplomats from Israel and Arab States participating.

July 2014 – The P5+1 or E3+3 and Iran agree to a four-month extension of the initial deadline for a final deal. The new deadline is November 24, 2014.

Timeline of proposed WMD-Free Middle East²

Year	Key event
1962	The Israeli group – the Committee for Denuclearization of the Middle East – proposed the idea of a NWFZ in the region. ³
1974	Iran proposes and the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopts a resolution supporting the establishment of a Middle East NWFZ.
1980	General Assembly resolution supports a Middle East NWFZ without a vote (Israel supports).
1991	Security Council Resolution 687 supports a Middle East WMDFZ after encouragement from Hosni Mubarak.
1995	NPT Review Conference adopts a Resolution on the Middle East calling for practical steps to establish a Middle East WMDFZ.
2005	NPT Review Conference fails to conclude with any final agreement, in part because Egypt blocked it on the basis of a lack of progress or intent on the 1995 resolution.
2010	NPT Review Conference agrees on the convening of a regional conference on a WMD Free Zone and to appoint an official Facilitator.

1 United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), *NPT Review Conference 1995, Resolution on the Middle East*, 17 April - 12 May 1995, New York: http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/1995-NPT/pdf/Resolution_MiddleEast.pdf

2 Arms Control Association, *WMD-Free Middle East Proposal at a Glance*, July 2013, <http://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/mewmdfz>

3 Arms Control Association, *The Long Journey Toward a WMD-Free Middle East*, September 2011. http://www.armscontrol.org/2011_09/The_Long_Journey_Toward_A_WMD-Free_Middle_East

4 Nuclear Threat Initiative, 11 November 2013, <http://www.nti.org/gsn/article/arab-league-backs-steps-toward-banning-mideast-wmds/>

5 Nabil Fahmy, Egyptian Minister of Foreign Affairs, General Assembly of the UN, 28 September 2013 <http://gadebate.un.org/68/egypt>

WMD agreements in the Middle East as of 2014⁶

	NPT	CTBT	CWC	BTWC	AP
Algeria	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Bahrain	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Egypt	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red
Iran	Green	Yellow	Green	Green	Yellow
Iraq	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Israel	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Jordan	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Kuwait	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Lebanon	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
Libya	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Morocco	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Oman	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
Qatar	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red
Saudi Arabia	Green	Red	Green	Green	Red
Syria	Green	Red	Green	Yellow	Red
Tunisia	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
UAE	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Yemen	Green	Green	Green	Green	Red

Green	Signed and ratified
Yellow	Signed, not ratified
Red	Not signed

NPT: Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty
CTBT: Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
CWC: Chemical Weapons Convention
BTWC: Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention
AP: Additional Protocol (to the IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Agreement)

Core obstacles to achieving a WMD free zone in the Middle East⁷

Perceived utility - Persistent belief that WMDs are necessary for the survival of the state.

Distrust - Lack or absence of confidence building measures.

Institutional lacuna - Absence of regional institutions able to facilitate dialogue and credible verification.

Heightened political and social instability - Ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, domestic political upheaval across the region.

Existing Nuclear Weapon Free Zones⁸

The Latin America and Caribbean NWFZ (The Treaty of Tlatelolco)

- 33 countries
- Opened for signatures: 1967
- Entered into force: 1969

The South Pacific NWFZ (The Treaty of Rarotonga)

- 13 Pacific Islander countries (from the West coast of Australia to the beginning of the Latin American and Caribbean NWFZ)
- Opened for signatures: 1985
- Entered into force: 1986

The Southeast Asia NWFZ (The Treaty of Bangkok)

- 10 ASEAN countries
- Opened for signatures: 1995
- Entered into force: 1997

The African NWFZ (The Treaty of Pelindaba)

- All 53 African countries, including Egypt (though they have not ratified it)
- Opened for signatures: 1996
- Entered into force: 2009

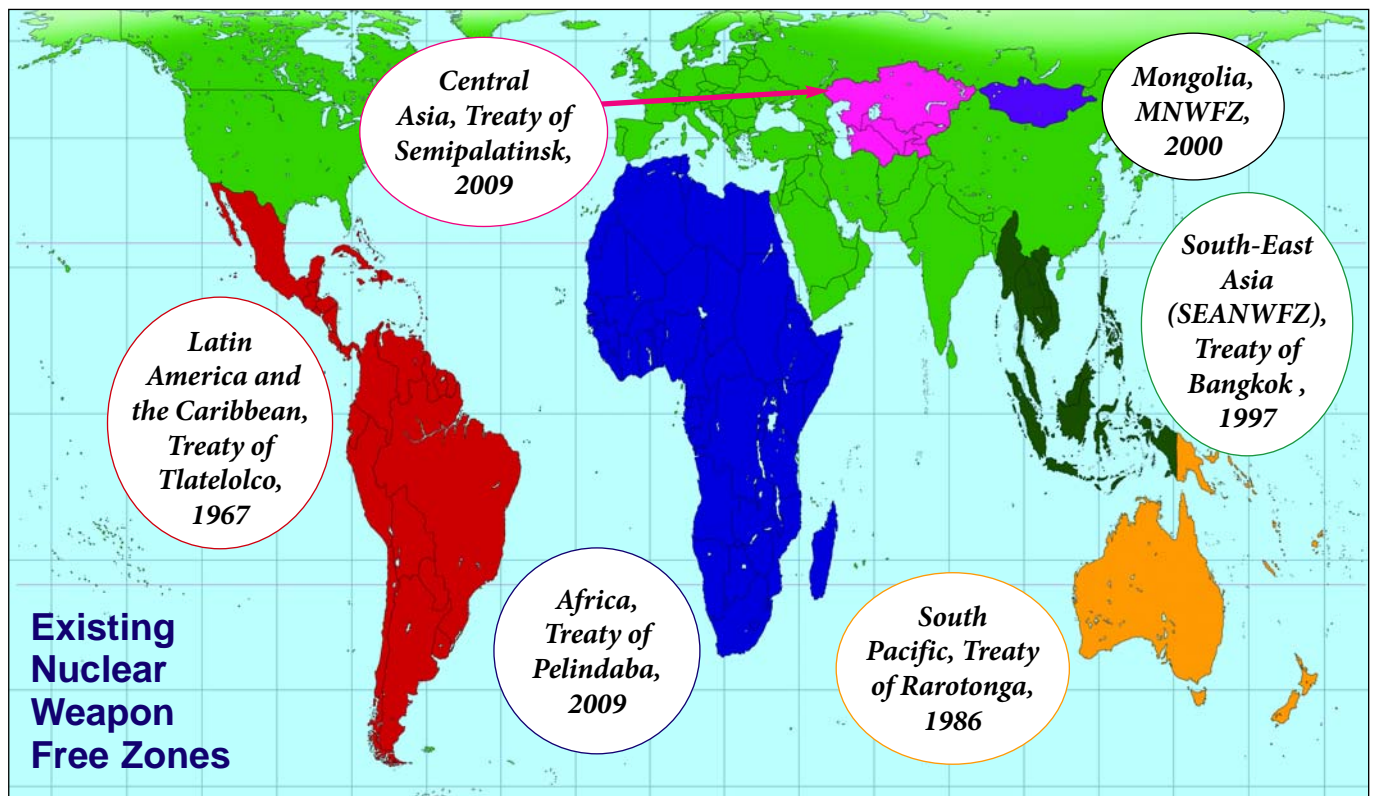
The Central Asia NWFZ Treaty (CANWFZ)

- 5 Central Asian countries (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan)
- Opened for signatures: 2006
- Entered into force: 2009

⁶ Foradori & Malin, *A WMD-Free Zone in the Middle East Creating the Conditions for Sustained Progress*, Belfer Centre for Science and International Affairs, Harvard Kennedy School: December 2012, page 16: http://belfercenter.ksg.harvard.edu/files/WMDFFZ_PDF.pdf

⁷ *Ibid*, pp. 6-17:

⁸ UNODA, *Nuclear Weapon Free Zones*, accessed December 2013: <http://www.un.org/disarmament/WMD/Nuclear/NWFZ.shtml>



Strategic outlook for the Middle East WMD-Free Zone

The obstacles to achieving a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East are complex but can be characterized from the strategic viewpoint of three key blocs:

Israel ⁹

- Many of Israel's neighbors refuse to formally recognize the existing state of Israel; Syria does not recognize Israel in part due to the Israeli capture of the Golan Heights during the Six Day War of 1967; more broadly in the region, Israel is not recognized because of perceived injustice by the Arab states and Iran over Israel's treatment of Palestinians and the lack of progress on a settlement of a future state of Palestine.
- Not party to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) nor its agreements, the Israelis do not feel bound by its members' decisions. Yet a WMD Free Zone without Israel is of limited value.
- Israel seeks normalization with its neighbors - these processes could lead to progress on this objective.
- Israel has an ambiguous nuclear status, as it does not confirm its arsenal, and is highly committed to a self-help model in providing for its own national security.
- Israel is estimated to have 100 - 200 nuclear weapons.¹⁰
- Israel is outside of the NPT, BTWC and Additional Protocol, Israel has signed but not ratified the CTBT and CWC.
- Believed to have chemical weapons capability but uncertain stockpile.

Iran

- Iran describes its nuclear program as being peaceful in intent.
- Has not accounted for what IAEA describes as activities that replicate those of the development of a nuclear weapon for delivery by missile.¹¹
- Security outlook has been shaped by isolation, surrounded by hostile Arab neighbors to the west, two regional nuclear neighbors, and an openly hostile United States with forces in several neighboring states.
- Full member of the BTWC, CWC, and NPT.
- Signatory of the CTBT and AP but both are yet to be ratified by the Iranian parliament.

⁹ British American Security Information Council, *Belief in the WMD Free Zone Designing the corridor to Helsinki and beyond*, BASIC Collaborative briefing involving Israeli and international civil society: November 27th 2013, page 2: <http://www.basicint.org/sites/default/files/wmdfz-israel.pdf>

¹⁰ International Panel on Fissile Material, *Global Fissile Material Report 2013*, Increasing Transparency of Nuclear Warhead and Fissile Material Stocks as a Step toward Disarmament: October 2013, page 9: <http://fissilematerials.org/library/gfmr13.pdf>

¹¹ International Atomic Energy Agency, *Implementation of the NPT Safeguards Agreement and relevant provisions of Security Council resolutions in the Islamic Republic of Iran*, Report by the Director General: November 18th 2011, page 8, paragraph. 44: <http://www.iaea.org/Publications/Documents/Board/2011/gov2011-65.pdf>

The Middle East WMD-Free Zone

The 18 countries of the proposed WMDFZ in the Middle East are shown on the map. For the WMDFZ to come into force all the countries need to sign 5 treaties:

1. Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT)
2. Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)
3. Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)
4. Biological and Toxin Weapons Treaty (BTWT)
5. Additional Protocol (to IAEA's Comprehensive Safeguards Treaty (AP))



- Only five states are officially WMD-free; Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Morocco & Yemen.
- Eleven states have both signed and ratified all treaties (except for the AP).
- Israel remains the least compliant, having not signed and ratified a single treaty.

Arab states

- Egypt has been an important leader in keeping attention on a Middle East WMDFZ ever since it first submitted the proposal to the Geneva Conference on Disarmament in 1990, and in maintaining pressure on the nuclear weapon states globally to disarm.¹²
- All Arab states in the Middle East are members of the NPT.
- The Arab awakening has distracted attention from the WMDFZ process, at least in the short run, though some believe it could assist in longer term.
- Egypt is the only remaining Arab state not to have signed the CWC, seeing this as leverage over the Israeli nuclear program.
- Saudi Arabia has expressed growing concern over both Iran's and Israel's nuclear programs and has hinted that it may follow suit. In any case both Saudi Arabia and the UAE are embarking on ambitious new nuclear power programs.
- The Syrian conflict has complicated the WMDFZ process, with ambiguity over who represents the country, and in the hostility between regional actors spilling over into other diplomatic arenas. On the other hand, the conflict has led directly to Syria becoming a full member of the CWC and relinquishing its CW, opening the door to Israel considering ratification.
- Israel conducted an airstrike on Syria's suspected nuclear reactor site at Deir az-Zour in 2007.¹³

Progress within the region

- Israel has a peace treaty with Egypt (1979) and Jordan (1994).
- Mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO (1993).
- Iraq-Iran rivalry has dissipated with the ascendance of a pro-Shiite government in Baghdad, though this has led to tension with Saudi Arabia.
- Iraq has been completely disarmed of its WMD stocks through the 1991 war and subsequently by UNSCOM in the 1990s.
- Egypt-Saudi Arabia rivalry that existed during Gamel Abdel Nasser's years is no longer militarized - relations with the new Egyptian government are positive.
- As of January 2014, Libya has fully dismantled its category 1 chemical weapons program.¹⁴
- All states (except Israel) are full members of at least one major WMD global treaty. Israel allows limited inspection of civil facilities by IAEA.

12 Federation of American Scientists, *Egypt's Nuclear Weapons Program*, last updated May 2012: <http://www.fas.org/nuke/guide/egypt/nuke/>

13 Nuclear Threat Initiative, *Syria Country Profile*, last updated October 2013: <http://www.nti.org/country-profiles/syria/>

14 Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, *Libya Completes Destruction of Its Category 1 Chemical Weapons*, February 2014, <http://www.opcw.org/news/article/libya-completes-destruction-of-its-category-1-chemical-weapons/>