

EUROPE NEWSLETTER

Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) is a non-partisan unarmed peacekeeping force composed of trained civilians from around the world. In partnership with local groups, Nonviolent Peaceforce field teams apply proven nonviolent strategies to protect human rights, deter violence and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work.

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Since 2003 Nonviolent Peaceforce is deploying multinational professional peace teams in Sri Lanka to increase security of civilians, especially the most vulnerable ones and those working for peace and human rights.

NP PROGRAMME IN SRI LANKA

- **The Colombo Response Team** continues to collaborate on expanding safety networks for human rights defenders (HRDs) and other vulnerable civilians... *(continues to page 2)*
- **The Tricomalee and Mutur Team** started executing its 'Phase-out Plan', with a focus on strengthening the linkages between and among the district Peace Committees and other NGOs... *(continues to page 2)*
- **The Jaffna** team carried out 18 field activities and inter-agency coordination meetings during January, recorded five new cases of families seeking assistance and advice... *(continues to page 2)*

In Sudan and Georgia, NP is Exploring Needs for Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping
(continues to page 7)

In Mindanao, the main Southern island of the Philippines affected by a protracted armed conflict, NP is deploying since spring 2007 multinational professional peace teams to increase the capacity of local civilians in early warning and early action for conflict prevention in isolated and volatile areas.

- The European Commission Gives Support to NP Activities in Mindanao -
The recently approved grant aims at promoting dialogue and confidence-building in Mindanao
... *(continues to page 5)*

NP PROGRAMME IN MINDANAO (PHILIPPINES)

- **The Cotabato Main Office** was deeply satisfied to witness how most IDPs in the North Cotabato region managed to settle back in their areas of origin... *(continues to page 4)*
- **NP Central Mindanao Team** has been meeting several community leaders who reported the damages caused to their properties and injuries sustained to the civilians from mortar shelling over the past months... *(continues to page 5)*
- **NP Sulu/Basilan**, in coordination with local network partners of Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society Organization and Yakan Integrated Resource Development Centre... *(continues to page 5)*



Atif Hamed, NP Philippines Project Director, listening to the concerns of villagers in the province of Basilan

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Sri Lanka 2

Philippines 4

Vote for Peace 6

Highlights from NP member organisations 7

The next European meeting of NP Member Organisations and the 'European Network for Civil Peace Services' (EN.CPS) will take place between this June 16th and 19th in the Norwegian city of Lillehammer, followed by a conference about Civil Peace Services on June 20th in Oslo. If your organisation is a member and you would like to delegate a representative, or you want to propose an organisation to be represented there, please contact Alessandro Rossi, NP European Coordinator, at arossi@nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

NP PROGRAMME IN SRI LANKA

The last months have witnessed a sharp increase on violence in Sri Lanka, as the government security forces advance its offensive against the LTTE in the north of the island. Following the government's taking of Kilinochchi, the previous administrative center of the LTTE, the Sri Lanka army is progressively narrowing the area in the northeast corner of the country where the LTTE is making what appeared to be its final stand.

Such military developments have forced an estimated quarter of a million people to displace from their areas of residence, as they attempted to find safety from the escalating fighting.

COLOMBO RESPONSE TEAM (CRT)



NP CRT continues to collaborate on **expanding safety networks for human rights defenders (HRDs) and other vulnerable civilians**. As an example, the team supported a HRD from Jaffna currently based in Colombo, accompanying him while he continues his human rights work, documenting human rights cases, and visiting other human rights organizations and families affected by HR violations. Recently, a sweep of the NP Guesthouse was carried out by police under the government's Emergency Procedures, and the intern, along with the NP driver and two other partners, were **taken into custody for questioning** and later released.

TRICOMALEE AND MUTUR TEAM



The team started **executing its 'Phase-out Plan', with a focus on strengthening the linkages** between and among the district Peace Committees and other NGOs, INGOs, government departments, community based organizations (CBOs) and institutions. The team is facilitating the implementation and evaluation of 12 small initiatives identified by the Peace Communities and funded by NP supporters from Japan.

Furthermore the team in Tricomalee has been in close collaboration with the government's Department of Child Protection in order to effectively monitor different children's homes. At the same time, the team **provided presence and accompaniment to several youth** when no other organization could fill that need.

JAFFNA TEAM



The Jaffna team carried out 18 field activities and inter-agency coordination meetings during January, recorded five new cases of families seeking assistance and advice, and **accompanied two families to access authorities and/or improve their safety**. Families were reporting a variety of concerns, including confiscated identity cards, harassment, or requests for safer places for threatened family members.

The team also worked to **support the needs of university students cut off from their families** in the Vanni. They depend on support from their families for their living and school expenses while trying to continue their studies in a war zone. With the current fighting in the North, it is not possible for them to be in contact with their families .

The president of the Jaffna University Student Union called and asked NP to meet him and other student union officers. They told how two men on a motorbike had come that morning and forced a student to put a leaflet on the walls. The leaflet identified 14 names including students and lecturers and didn't have a specific request but wanted to inform ICRC and NP of the threat, since NP provides periodic protective presence at the University.

BATTICALOA AND VALAICHCHENAI TEAMS



During January, NP team assisted in Valaichchenai 19 families requiring various interventions, including two **accompaniments**. Additionally, it continued to regularly **monitor IDP camps and resettlement areas** affecting at least 290 families. Through the Early Warning Network developed by the team in collaboration with local community based organisations (CBOs) partners, 98 contacts are readily reachable in times of crisis or to verify rumours in times of tensions that can spark communal violence

In Batticaloa, NP carried a large family caseload, with some of them involving threatened children. They also followed up on a number of other families from the previous months providing emergency response and monitoring.

Other group of families were also assisted through the provision of **protective presence and accompaniment to help families out in resolving cases of underage recruitment, missing family members, and other threats to their security.**

The NP team in Batticaloa worked with local human rights defenders and the Batti Peace Committee to help prepare 19 families to complete and file complaints regarding the 'Enforced or Involuntary Disappearance' of family members.



During the group work - NP staff sharing the ideas

Since 2003, the activities of the NP in Sri Lanka teams are focused on the beneficial role internationals can play in promoting civilian security and human rights, to solve problems nonviolently, improve human security, and promote access for civilians to human rights mechanisms and protection under the law



NP PROGRAMME IN THE PHILIPPINES

NP is training community based human rights workers to strengthen local capacities to protect human rights through engagement rather than confrontation

Amnesty International, in its report entitled "Shattered Peace in Mindanao: the human cost of conflict in the Philippines," revealed that the suspension of the peace talks between the government and insurgents in Mindanao last August increased the total of internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) to 400,000. Over the last months, and due to a lessening of the fighting, there have been certain improvements on the IDPs' situation, with some of them being able to return to their homes.

The decline of the tensions has consequently prompted hopes for a renewed horizon of peace talks. As the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process stated, there is scope for "the government to resume the stalled peace talks with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Differences between the two sides can be worked out."

NP COTABATO MAIN OFFICE (CMO)

One of the key objectives of the different NP teams deployed in Mindanao is to monitor the situation in the Internal Displaced Persons (IDPs) camps spread in the south of the island. Consequently, NP Cotabato Main Office (CMO) was deeply satisfied to **witness how most IDPs in the North Cotabato region managed to settle back** in their respective *barangays*, the smallest administrative division in the Philippines.

In an effort to prompt similar positive outcomes, NP CMO **organised and facilitated meetings of the protection cluster (which includes different organisations)** in the premises of NP Main Offices in Cotabato city. The protection cluster was launched to pay exclusive attention to the protection needs

of the IDPs and civilians in conflict affected areas of Mindanao.

NP CMO has also been very active in the framework of promoting dialogue among the confronted parties. With this purpose borne in mind, NP CMO has **met with high military officials** in the military headquarters as well as in the Regional Command Centres. Similarly, the Main office regularly met the **key members of the Central Committee of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front.**

NP is well aware that the engagement of the warring sides into conversations aimed at understanding 'the other's' needs is a useful path to peacefully settle the conflict.

NP CENTRAL MINDANAO TEAM (CMT)

The NP CMT has been meeting several community leaders who reported the damages caused to their properties and injuries sustained to the civilians from mortar shelling over the pasts months. Furthermore, and at the request of the local health department, NP CMT teams have been providing protective accompaniment on various occasions to medical field officers, enabling them to visit IDPs camps situated close to the firing lines and to evacuate injured children from the camps.

In its role of building bridges to support reconciliation among the confronted communities, and after being asked by local community leaders, **NP CMT organised and facilitated a meeting with community leaders from Dapiawan/Elian, Madia and Pagatin.** The meeting focused on the overall situation of evacuations centres and how representatives of the IDPs could be connected with the relevant agencies.

NP SULU/BASILAN

NP Sulu/Basilan team, in coordination with local network partners of Consortium of Bangsamoro Civil Society Organization and Yakan integrated Resource Development Centre, conducted a series of talks with a wide range of implicated groups in both sides of the divide, like the Armed Forces of the Philippines and the Moro Islamic and Moro National Liberation Front. These **consultations channelled NP team's network-building with key stakeholders as well as facilitated their feedback and support** on the planned community based human rights programme.

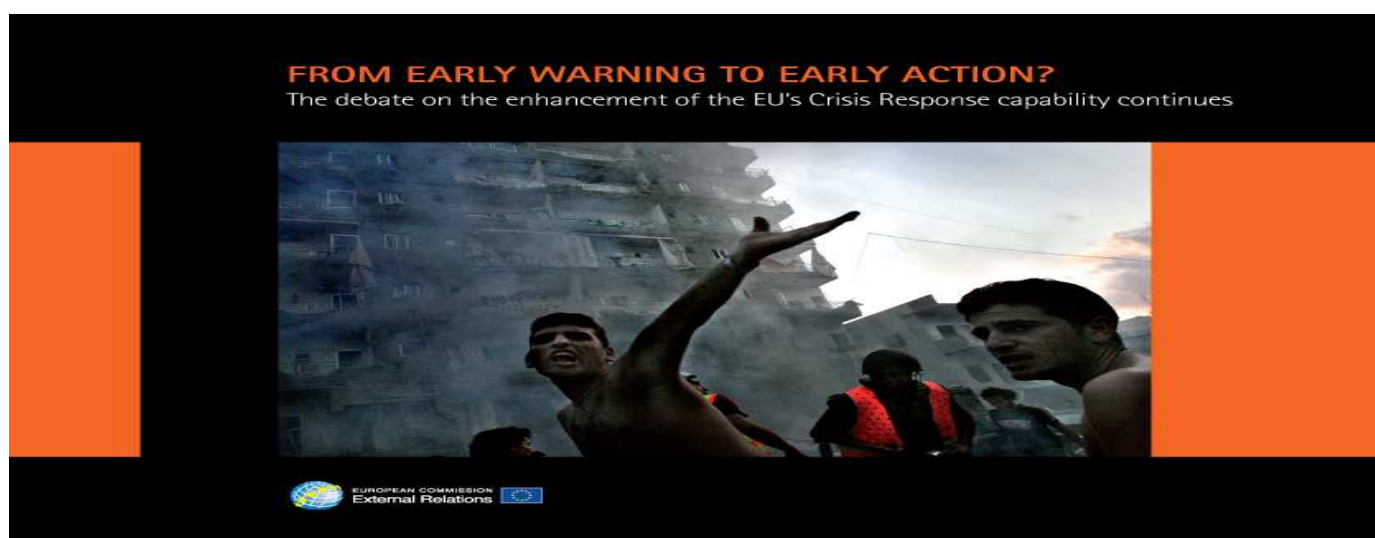
The team received multiple cases of human rights violations as the intermittent fire fights broke out in the island of Basilan. NP **relayed the relevant information to the key authorities on both sides in the conflict to prevent the escalation of violence.** NP team visited the office of the Commission of Human Rights in Zamboanga city and updated it on NP's work in the islands of Basilan and Sulu, updating on the human rights situation in the critical areas of Basilan. The Commission on human rights extended its support to NP.

THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION GIVES SUPPORT TO NP ACTIVITIES IN MINDANAO

(Continues from cover-page) Ambassador Alistair MacDonald, Head of Delegation of the European Commission (EC) to the Philippines, said that this assistance was very timely; **"civil society has an essential role to play in helping support the peace process and build a broader momentum for peace."**

This assistance follows the EU recent commitment on effectively tackling the increased violence in Mindanao and the growing number of civilian casualties and displaced persons. The actions of NP in Philippines fully matches the EU humanitarian mission in Philippines. As Atif Hamed, NP Philippines Project Director stressed in an article he wrote for the newsletter of the EC Delegation in Philippines, "NP carries out several activities in Mindanao, such as helping local groups to carry out rapid assessments of the living-conditions of Internally Displaced People (IDP), as many of the IDPs fled their houses in the middle of the nights without carrying any belongings; and supporting local groups in locating some IDPs who were lost in the remote areas and scattered because of fear and heavy fire flights."

LOBBYING EUROPE



NP CONTRIBUTES TO A EU PUBLICATION

The European Commission's Directorate-General for External Relations (DG RELEX), in collaboration with GOPA-Cartermill, has published a book on the EU's crisis response and crisis management. The new volume, entitled **'From early warning to early action? The debate on the enhancement of the EU's crisis response capability continues'**, includes a number of collaborations made by NP current and former staff.

Oloo Otieno, NP Africa coordinator, and Atif Hameed, NP Philippines Project Director, were each interviewed for the book. Furthermore, Christine Schweitzer, former NP Programme Director contributed an chapter called 'Civilian Peacekeeping: how civilian international interventions at grassroots level contribute to human security and stability.'

Other contributors to this book include the last novel price laureate and notorious UN peace mediator, Martti Ahtisaari, as well as the the European Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

NP QUOTED AS GOOD PRACTICE IN A EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT STUDY

The European Parliament-commissioned report **'Nonviolent Civic Action in Support of Human Rights and Democracy'** has recently been released. In its review of nonviolent international actions initiatives, the study quotes the work undertaken by NP in protective accompaniment. It particularly highlights NP's programmes in Sri Lanka and Philippines and how "they work with local activists, building confidence to take action for peace and human rights". On May 30th the report was presented in the European Parliament (EP) sub-committee for Human Rights. It will be shortly available on the EP website.

LOBBYING EUROPE

Join the "Europe, Vote for Peace!" campaign around the June European Parliament elections

In preparation for the 2009 European Parliament elections, civil society organisations working on peace and conflict issues from several EU member states have united around a common position. Jointly our organisations promote more efficient, more sustainable and less cost-intensive approaches to international conflicts and crisis. **Together we advocate for further recognition and support by the European Union for professional peacebuilding and civilian conflict resolution capacities**, with special attention to the added value civil society organisations can give in these fields. The campaign's key proposals are to establish an EU peacebuilding department or peacebuilding directorate, to strengthen and structure the dialogue between EU institutions and civil society, as well as the introduction of an European Civil Peace Service programme.

To date organisations from Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, Romania, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, and Netherlands are participating in the campaign. **Other organisations are invited to join the campaign and soon also individuals can sign our proposals under www.civilpeace.eu.**

2nd campaign meeting in Brussels– Sharing experiences, joining efforts

Last February 12th/13th, a second partnership meeting for the "Europe, Vote for Peace!" campaign took place in Brussels. **Representatives of the organisations promoting the campaign around Europe came together to share experiences, to plan and to coordinate the campaign's next steps.**

Likewise, the campaign's coordination team, based in Brussels informed about activities with current Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and European Parliament Political Groups. They also explained how the European Parliament relates to and interacts with the European Commission and the Council of the EU, showing entry points for the realisation of the campaign's key proposals. A number of the campaign's representatives from different countries had the chance to meet with their MEPs to inform them about the campaign and our proposals.

The 'Vote for Peace' campaign launches its new website



<http://civilpeace.eu/>

The campaign coordination has just launched an online platform on the 'Europe, Vote for Peace!' campaign.

The site is available at <http://www.civilpeace.eu/>. The website, available in English, German and French, is designed to invite European non-governmental organisations and individuals interested in peace and conflict resolution issues to support the campaign. The website also provides more in-depth information about our proposals. It will thus be useful also for politicians and policy-makers interested in

civil society initiatives for professional approaches to peacefully settle violent conflicts.

A variety of downloadable files and hyperlinks will allow the visitor to easily access a wider picture on EU policies for peacebuilding and related civil society initiatives.

NP EXPLORING NEEDS FOR UNARMED CIVILIAN PEACEKEEPING IN SUDAN AND GEORGIA

Year 2009, Issue 1



David Grant and Otieno Ombok (from the left) with Michael Oliver (far right) from the Institute for the Promotion of Civil Society. (photo by IPCS staff)

In February NP Strategic Relations Director David Grant and Africa Regional Coordinator Otieno Ombok visited Southern Sudan (Juba, Yei and Malakal) and Northern Sudan (Khartoum) upon invitation by Sudanese civil society.

Their exploratory mission will **allow NP governing bodies to make an informed decision about NP's ability to deploy international civilian peacekeepers in a volatile context.** The Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) – which provides in 2011 for a referendum for secession of the south – is fragile. The CPA ended one of Africa's longest civil wars, one which killed two million and displaced four .

Meanwhile, in Europe **NP is considering the demands by local civil society in Southern Caucasus to contribute with its independent presence to the international monitoring** on the ground in Georgia, especially in and around the break-away regions.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM NP MEMBER ORGANISATIONS

Forum Civil Peace Service's (forumZFD's) training department, the Academy for Conflict Transformation, offers an extensive training programme throughout the whole year. In addition, there now is the new feature of online learning units for self-study. Familiarize yourself with basic topics of conflict transformation such as /Do no harm/ or the conflict transformation model of Diana Francis. All self-learning courses are available in English and access is free of charge. More information under <http://www.forumzfd-akademie.de/en-af>.

The **Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution** (ASPR) invites representatives from relevant institutions to the Course on "Peacebuilding" sponsored by the Austrian Ministry of Defence and Sports, and organised by the Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR) from 18-26 April 2009.

Nominees can send their application for the Peacebuilding course **not later than 19 March 2009**. Questions about this training can be directed to , Ms. Ursula Gamauf (gamauf@aspr.ac.at).

The **Romanian International Peace and Development Training Center** (IPDTC) is launching its 2009 Spring Peace Academy. A range of programmers addressing the core skills, knowledge and experience of all practitioners working in the field of peacebuilding, conflict transformation, development work, humanitarian aid, governance and other related areas.

The **Norwegian Peace Association** has carried out a small study on the potential for a Civil Peace Service in Norway and a TV-documentary is under production. A draft proposal for a Civil Peace Service, called NORPEACE is now sent out on a hearing was presented on 20 March together with the TV-documentary.

The **German NP Working Group** is planning to organise a number of presentations in Germany at the biannual meeting of Protestants to spread the word of NP's mission and work. Moreover, it is hopeful to obtain some funds for awareness raising (with a focus on schools) on civil conflict resolution in general, and the work of NP in particular. Part of this project would be a tour with former or still active FTMs reporting vividly about their peace work.



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NP EUROPE WELCOMES TWO NEW INTERNS

Shirley de Leon holds a bachelor degree in Political Science and International Relations from the *Universidad Rafael Landívar* (Guatemala) and a MA in Development Studies from the *Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies* (Geneva). Shirley has worked for the Swiss Campaign to Ban Landmines and for the South Centre (both in Geneva).

Julie Marie Lou Cerisier Didier holds a Bachelor Degree in Law from the *University of the Balearic Islands* (Spain) and took part in the 14th and 15th edition of the International Arbitration program, the Willem C. Vis Moot. Julie speaks French, English, Spanish and Catalan.

NONVIOLENT PEACEFORCE (NP)

We are an International NGO engaged in the creation of a large-scale international unarmed peacekeeping force, composed of trained civilians.

In partnership with local groups, NP members **apply proven non-violent strategies to protect human rights, deter violence and help create space for local peacemakers to carry out their work.** Launched in 1999 at the Hague Appeal for Peace and established at the convening event in Surajkund, India in 2002, NP brings together over 69 Member Organisations from around the world and is endorsed by 9 Nobel Peace Laureates.

NP

Deploys international, trained, civilian field teams to conflict areas upon invitation by local peace groups.

Builds capacity for nonviolent intervention through trainings, assessment, recruitment, rosters, and rapid response mechanisms in crisis areas.

Conducts public awareness campaigns and political advocacy to increase international support and recognition of civilian nonviolent intervention's effectiveness in preventing violence and fostering a global culture of peace.

CHECK OUR WEBSITE: WWW.NONVIOLENTPEACEFORCE.ORG

NP INTERNAL NEWS

NP INTERNATIONAL GOVERNING COUNCIL MEETS IN BARCELONA

The annual meeting of NP International Governing Council (IGC) is taking place this year in Europe. Barcelona will host, April 16th to 25th, the gathering of NP, guiding body, which this time will be also attended by some NP Regional Coordinators and Directors.

In the frame of this meeting, the Barcelona based organisation [NOVA-Centre per a la Innovació Social](#) is coordinating several public events on unarmed civilian peacekeeping with the participation of like-minded local organisations and political parties.



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