



Ayoub Hassan Abdalla Zalingei (Central Darfur)

As part of the UNs' support to the African Union's Initiative on Silencing the Guns in Africa by 2020, UNAMID has partnered with Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP) to provide capacity building on unarmed protection methodologies to African youth and peace leaders in Darfur through an online training course. From June to July, over 40 Darfuris from all 5 Darfur states were trained. Below, you find one out of eight interviews of course graduates who give their insights on how the eight-week course has changed their perspective on how to deal with conflict and how to change behaviours of those around them to prevent or mitigate violence.

My name is Ayoub Hassan Abdalla, I am from South Darfur state, Kass city. Since I graduated from university five years ago, I dedicated my life to my community in Central Darfur providing health and social services for those plagued by war over the last two decades. I currently live in Zalingei, Central Darfur. I am 28 years old.

How has this course added to or changed what you knew or believed about protecting civilians or securing communities?

The course was one of the most valuable courses I have ever taken. As we spent most of our life experiencing conflicts, killing, displacing from place to another, I really needed such an initiative because what I knew about protecting civilians is that it is done only by using weapons and applying strict military measures. But fortunately, this course taught me how there are more peaceful, effective and civilized methods to protect civilians, represented in methods and principles of UCP.

Of the things you learned or experienced in the UCP course, what has been the most important for you?

The most important thing I learned during the UCP course is nonviolence, and to be honest, my mentality has completely changed regarding confrontations and dealing with difficult situations in which violence and fighting prevail, and how to contain such situations in peerless peace and without losses.

Were you able to use the information

and methods from the UCP course in your life, whether in your family, your community, or your work? Can you give one example?

No doubt, what I learned will positively and significantly affect my behavior regarding dealing with those around me, whether on the street, the workplace or the club, accompanying with me every word I learned from the course. As my community has been severely affected by the war, many only think about taking advantage of any opportunity for revenge. Therefore, what I learned from the course will definitely help me in teaching them and make them aware of the need to follow peaceful methods as much as possible to achieve peace and reconcile with oneself first, and then with those around us. For example, many people in my community now believe that everyone who works in any government institution is their enemy. I have already started to change these concepts and I made a huge progress toward ending them.

What initiatives in civilian protection have you participated in since you took the course, if any?

There is an initiative launched in Jabal Marra area to support the process of peaceful coexistence between all components of society regardless of class disparities. I participated in it and delivered a presentation on rumor control and the need to verify information from reliable sources. I assured them that most conflicts starts with incorrect rumors about imminent attacks or conspiracy by one ethnic group against another, result-

ing in large loses that could be avoided.

What opportunities for UCP do you see in your community?

I think the time is now appropriate to implement UCP as the war is now almost over, and the tyrannical regime that made the war has been dethroned. therefore, this opportunity must be taken advantage of, to consolidate lasting peace before any setbacks occur, and I am sure that UCP strategies will succeed in bringing about a radical change and ending the war forever. So, from here I call on Nonviolent Peaceforce and other organizations working in the field of unarmed civilian protection, to come to Darfur to build sustainable peace.

How do you see that UCP can contribute to silencing the guns in Darfur?

The process of silencing guns in Darfur may be to some extent difficult, because the conflict of Darfur is multi-layered as it has both vertical and horizontal dimensions at the same time. But the war in Darfur was fabricated by the past regime, and the regime is now dethroned, so the insurmountable difficulties have been removed. I think that UCP has a great potential for success. For this success to be achieved it must however begin by intensive awareness raising about the disadvantages of guns and to what extent they can contribute to the destruction of societies and the loss of lives. Also, our communities generally respect international actors and put trust in them, so this is also a good point which will facilitate UCP and contribute to silencing guns in Darfur.