



Affirming the vision and practice of active nonviolence at the heart of the Catholic Church.

A project of Pax Christi International

Civilians protecting civilians: No need for guns



Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a methodology for the direct protection of civilian, for localized violence reduction, and for supporting local peace infrastructures. UCP provides unarmed, specially trained civilians who live and work with local civil society in areas of violent conflict.

Unarmed civilian protection is an emerging methodology, now practiced by 12 international nongovernmental organizations operating in 17 countries providing direct protection to civilians in violent conflicts from Colombia to South Sudan to Palestine to the United States.[1]

Increasingly recognized as an effective tool for the protection of civilians, UCP has been cited and recommended in major UN studies including the High Level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO), that clearly stated “**Unarmed strategies must be at the forefront of UN efforts to protect civilians.**”[2]

Unarmed protectors play an important role in sustaining peace:

- Providing direct protection to local peacebuilders who are under threat, such as when they directly saved 14 people during an armed militia attack in South Sudan.[3]
- Helping to create and protect safer spaces for local people to work across political, ethnic, geographic and religious divides.
- Developing local capacities for dialogue and dispute resolution.
- Strengthening local peace infrastructures. Adding to the stability of areas emerging from violent conflict.

The *four main methods of UCP* are identified here along with their practical applications.

While not appropriate in every conflict, unarmed civilian protectors apply field-tested methods in a nonpartisan and nonviolent manner always focusing on the primacy of local people. **Evidence** suggests that UCP impacts positively on the safety of civilians and the capacity for them to engage in everyday activities that might be otherwise risky. Recent evaluations indicate that lives are saved, communities are able to stay at home rather than be displaced, the behavior of armed actors changes, local actors are given more primacy and peace and human rights work is made more possible.[4]

More people have had to flee their homes for longer periods because of violence than any time since World War II. Over 65 million people fled because of war and persecution last year. Thus, we have to scale up effective ways to protect civilians.

Jesus lived a nonviolent life, taught it, and died it. Armed peacekeeping introduces more arms to an already volatile situation. Jesus introduced love and reconciliation. He blessed the peacemakers as the children of God. When the crowd came armed with swords and clubs to arrest Jesus, Simon Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of one of the high priest's slaves. Jesus commanded him to put his sword back in its place and explained that all who live by the sword will die by the sword. UCP provides a means to protect civilians without swords while promoting reconciliation. It is one of the nonviolent practices promoted in the Appeal to the Catholic Church to re-commit to the centrality of Gospel nonviolence issued to the Pope after the Nonviolence and Just Peace conference in Rome, April 2016.[5]

Learn more about UCP through Nonviolent Peaceforce: www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org



[1] Sample organizations include Nonviolent Peaceforce, Operation Dove, and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

[2] As well as the Global Study on the Implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, 2016 and the Independent Commission on Multilateralism.

[3] www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/all-country-news/2014-06-26-17-22-49/60-andres-gutierrez-and-derek-oakley-on-their-experience-of-the-violence-in-south-sudan

[4] www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org/about-3/about-8

[5] www.nonviolencejustpeace.net