



The **GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION AND PRAYER FOR SYRIA**

will be held on September 21. In preparation we have asked guest experts to contribute essays that help our understanding of “the things that make for peace.” We hope these will help in our understanding of an alternative vision of peace with justice and practical peace-making strategies that can stand as alternatives to the war and violence that is being perpetuated in Syria. This is the third in this series of background essays.

Syria Global Day of Action and Prayer: September 21st, 2016

UNARMED CIVILIAN PROTECTION

By Eli S. McCarthy PhD, Director of Justice and Peace for Conference of Major Superiors of Men

Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is an emerging methodology for the direct protection of civilians and for localized violence reduction. UCP provides unarmed, specially trained civilians, recruited from many countries and cultures, to live and work with local civil society in areas of violent conflict. It has grown in practice and recognition in the last few decades, with over 50 civil society organizations applying UCP methods in 35 conflict areas since 1990.¹ UCP can be applied at all stages of a conflict, but it can be particularly effective at an early stage, to prevent or mitigate violent conflict, and also after violent conflict has subsided, to support the transition to healthy civil society. UCP can work in conflict areas where no United Nations peacekeepers are present (e.g., [Mindanao](#), Myanmar, Colombia) but also in areas of UN missions (e.g., [South Sudan](#)). The concept of UCP contributes to several discourses taking place at the UN and elsewhere, including Protection of Civilians; Children in Armed Conflict; Women, Peace and Security; Mediation; Human Security; and Peacebuilding. These discourses, in turn, lend further support and legitimacy to the practice of UCP.



Key Methods:



Examples: South Sudan and Syria



In [South Sudan in April 2014](#), armed protestors forced their way into a UN civilian protection area in Bor, Jonglei State. They opened fire on the 5,100 internally displaced persons, primarily women and children, who had been sheltering there. Only two Nonviolent Peaceforce

(NP) members on the ground courageously were able to directly protect five women and nine children in the sudden chaos of the attack. On three separate occasions men with guns approached the NP team who were sheltering together with the women and children in a *tukul* (mud hut). The men with guns demanded the NP team leave the women and children to be killed. The NP peacekeepers

saved the lives of those women and children by refusing to leave them and repeatedly clarifying their role and identities as humanitarian workers. When the attack ended, the team then worked tirelessly into the night collecting the wounded, verifying deaths and working together with partner organizations to organize medical evacuations to Juba.

In Syria, the [Nonviolent Peaceforce](#) and [Cure Violence](#) are in the midst of intensive training of 45 Syrian civil society leaders in violence interruption and unarmed civilian protection. These 45 will then lead trainings for up to 2,000 additional organizations or individuals in Syria. Ongoing support will be provided to local Syrian groups as they develop context-appropriate initiatives.

Towards Concrete Action to Transform the Conflict

Consider funding some of these worthy projects:

- [Unarmed Civilian Protection in Syria](#). The Nonviolent Peaceforce and Cure Violence have been [training](#) Syrian civil society actors in these proven methods.
- [Unarmed Civilian Protection in Northern Iraq, near the Syrian border](#). The Christian Peacemaker Team is [accompanying](#) mountain village and shepherd communities in the Iraqi Kurdistan area. They also offer workshops on nonviolence.



***To DONATE to any of these organizations [click here](#) and follow the instructions.**

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How Can You Take Part in the GLOBAL DAY OF ACTION AND PRAYER FOR SYRIA?

- An [Interfaith Prayer Service](#) will be held at the Community Church of New York on September 21st at 5:00 p.m. Use this [flyer](#) to promote the event and join us!
- Use the available [Toolkit of Resources](#) to plan a prayer service or other activity in your community in conjunction with the day.

- *Your congregation, organization or community can endorse the interfaith [Call for an End to the War in Syria](#), which will be issued at a press conference prior to the service. To endorse, contact GlobalDayforSyria@gmail.com.*
- *Like and follow GDAPS us on social media at [Facebook.com/GlobalDayForSyria](https://www.facebook.com/GlobalDayForSyria) or using [#GlobalDayForSyria](#).*

Current co-sponsors:

Association of Trauma Outreach and Prevention (ATOP) Meaningfulworld | Buddhist Council of New York | The Center and Library for the Bible and Social Justice | Colomban Center for Advocacy and Outreach | Community of Living Traditions at Stony Point Center | Conference of Major Superiors of Men | Disciples Peace Fellowship | Fellowship of Reconciliation | Franciscan Action Network | Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ | Interfaith Center of New York | JPIC Committee, Passionists of North America | Kolot Chayeinu/Voices of Our Lives | Leadership Conference of Women Religious | Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns | Mennonite Central Committee U.S. | Muslim Peace Fellowship | Pax Christi International | Pax Christi Long Island | Pax Christi USA | Presbyterian Church (USA) | Presbyterian Peace Fellowship | Refugee & Immigration Ministries, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) | United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries | United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

ⁱ Janzen, Randy. 2014, "[Shifting Practices of Peace: What is the Current State of Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping?](#)" Peace Studies Journal, Vol. 7, Issue 3, pp. 49-50. See also list [here](#) and Janzen's larger UCP [database](#).