

Newsletter

Creating Safer Space

July 2024



Dear All,

We are delighted to report from warm and sunny Medellín, Colombia, where we have recently held the third of our final regional events, exploring nonviolent community self-protection, care, and resistance in different locations of Colombia.

Moving on to New York, we have presented our research findings at a policy event with ambassadors from several countries, as well as representatives from international organisations involved in the protection of civilians in conflict.

We also have more opportunities for people elsewhere in the world to follow our work: our exhibition and many of our films are now freely available to view on our website.

We are very pleased to report from our projects in Thailand, Palestine and Kenya. The harrowingly beautiful song/poem on police brutality by *Spontaneous the Poet* brought tears to our eyes – don't miss this.

Finally, we are very saddened that our Advisory Board Member, Chaiwat Satha-Anand, has passed away. He was a leading scholar and advocate of peace and nonviolence, and you can read his obituary [here](#).

Creating Safer Space is an international research network, which aims to understand and support unarmed civilian protection and self-protection amidst violent conflict.

Final Event in Latin America

The *Creating Safer Space* network held a three-day final event in Medellín in Colombia, from 5 – 7 June 2024. The event was hosted by the University of Antioquia.

The final event was organized to bring researchers and other stakeholders together to share research findings, to enable higher-level learning and synergies across research projects in Colombia, and to make plans for future collaborations.

Each of the 10 *Creating Safer Space* projects in Colombia sent at least two representatives to the event, and the event brought together about 30 participants in total. Participants explored a wide range of topics, including community self-protection in contexts of urban violence, the understanding of self-protection beyond the physical dimension, spirituality as a tool for self-protection, the spontaneous and unplanned dimension of unarmed civilian protection, the relationship between care and self-protection in processes of land defense, and the role of art as a creative and nonviolent strategy to confront violence.

Participants were also able to visit the [Creating Safer Space exhibition](#), which will continue to be on display at the Carlos Gaviria Díaz Library of the University of Antioquia until 30 July 2024. There are [guided tours](#) available throughout July, focusing on different aspects of UCP and the exhibition.

More information about the event is available [here](#).

This is the third of our three final events. The [Final Event for Africa and the Middle East](#) took place in Kenya in January, and the [Final Event for South-East Asia](#) took place in Thailand in February.



Protection of Civilians Week in New York

The *Creating Safer Space* network had the pleasure of co-organising a Protection of Civilians (POC) Week side event in New York on 23 May 2024.

The event was organised together with CIVIC, Global Protection Cluster (GPC)/UNHCR, HPG/ODI, Oxfam, Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP), NORCAP, and PAX along with the Permanent Observer Mission of the African Union to the UN and the Permanent Missions of El Salvador, the Netherlands, Philippines, and South Sudan.

The event was chaired by Tiffany Easthom (Executive Director of Nonviolent Peaceforce), and speakers included Prof. Nerve Macaspac (*Creating Safer Space* Co-Investigator), Ambassadors from the Netherlands, El Salvador, South Sudan and the Philippines, peacemakers from South Sudan, and representatives of the African Union, ODI/HPG, MONUSCO, and other organisations.

Prof. Nerve Macaspac shared *Creating Safer Space* research, conducted by 26 project teams in eleven countries across three continents. Our research has found that communities and civil society organizations around the world often engage in practices of UCP without calling them such.

Our projects have uncovered and systematized a wide variety of hitherto unknown community activities and mechanisms of protection, including different forms of early warning and early response, protective accompaniment, and ways of negotiating with state officials and armed actors.

Prof. Macaspac highlighted the importance of recognizing local and community protection as an essential component of PoC; of including community protection strategies, capacities, and needs currently in place directly in the baseline of any assessment and funding decisions; and of ensuring that communities are included as decision-makers regarding how to use funding, who is involved in high-level meetings, and what protection approaches work in any given context.

More information about the event is available [here](#). We are very grateful to Gay Rosenblum-Kumar, Nonviolent Peaceforce's Representative to the UN, as one of the main organisers of the event.



Photo by Nonviolent Peaceforce

Our Exhibition 360° is Now Online

The *Creating Safer Space* exhibition is now available online!

The travelling exhibition has previously been on show in [Nairobi \(Kenya\)](#), [Bangkok \(Thailand\)](#), [Aberystwyth \(Wales\)](#), [New York \(USA\)](#) and [Medellín \(Colombia\)](#), and it will soon travel to Rio de Janeiro (Brazil). It is also now available online in the form of a [navigable 360° virtual tour](#).



The objects, images, and voices originate from a selection of [26 research projects](#) funded by the *Creating Safer Space* network, which have been conducted in collaboration between academics, self-protecting communities and nonviolent civilian accompaniers. The exhibition draws on experiences from Cameroon, Colombia, Indonesia, Kenya, Myanmar, Nigeria, Palestine, the Philippines, South Sudan, and Thailand, where civilians are harnessing the power of nonviolence to create safer spaces and work towards alternative presents and futures.

Watch *Creating Safer Space* Films Online

We have a new [Films Online](#) section on our website, with films produced by *Creating Safer Space* projects available to watch for free:

[Let the rivers be for life!](#) explores water conflicts around the rivers La Paloma (Argelia), Santo Domingo (San Francisco) and Dormilón (San Luis) in Colombia.

[Civil protection to stay on our land](#) documents the experience of Palestinian farmers and shepherds with civil protection in the South Hebron Hills.

[La Fiesta](#) is the recording of a theatre production performed by Harlequin and the Jugglers. It underscores the transformative power of art in communities affected by urban violence.

[Caring for community life](#) tells the story of how the Senú indigenous people in Colombia have been organizing to resist armed groups and to remain in their ancestral territories.

[Ramadan, Faith, Relationships, Peace](#) explores the impact of the conflict in southern Thailand on Malay Muslims, and their struggle to express their own identity and culture.

[When a young blood bleeds](#) is a song/poem about extra-judicial killings in Kenya, produced by *Spontaneous the Poet*.

[Minga](#) explores the history and meaning of a community-based socio-cultural and political practice known as Minga, an indigenous form of protest and resistance in Colombia.



News from *Creating Safer Space* Projects



The *Creating Safer Space* project '[Nonviolent Activism Against Police Brutality in Kenya](#)' has produced a video of a poem/song by *Spontaneous the Poet*, entitled '[When a Young Blood Bleeds](#)'. *Spontaneous the Poet*, aka Rachel Akinyi, was a research assistant on the project, and the poem/song was written in remembrance of people who've lost their relatives to extra-judicial killings. The spoken word piece / song was performed live at the *Creating Safer Space* [Final Event in Nairobi](#). It is freely available to listen to [here](#).



The *Creating Safer Space* project '[UCP in Southern Thailand: Developing civilian protection guidelines for violence-prone communities](#)' has produced a short film, which explores the impact of the conflict in southern Thailand on Malay Muslims, and their struggle to express their own identity and culture. The film is freely available [here](#).



Marwan Darweish and Mahmoud Soliman from the *Creating Safer Space* project '[Safety and dignity: Enhancing unarmed civilian protection amongst Palestinian communities in the South Hebron Hills](#)' presented their research findings at the British International Studies Association (BISA) Conference on 4-7 June 2024. They also showed their [film about UCP in the South Hebron Hills](#). Marwan Darweish was also invited to present the research findings and to show the film to the members of the Middle East Study Group at St Antony's College, Oxford University, on 25 May. The photo shows scholars who stand in solidarity with Palestinian colleagues in Gaza. Not one student has graduated in Gaza this year, and 124 academics have been killed.

External News

The Journal of International Peacekeeping has published an article by Louise Ridden, titled '[Nonviolent Knowledge\(s\) and Unarmed Civilian Protection](#)'.

Waging Nonviolence has published an article by Mel Duncan, titled [‘Now is the time to send unarmed peacekeepers to Gaza and the rest of Palestine’](#). The article cites research by *Creating Safer Space* Co-Investigator Rachel Julian.

Mel Duncan is spearheading a campaign to gather funds to [send 100 experienced unarmed civilian protectors to Palestine](#).

Civil Wars has published a Special Issue on Protection of Civilians, with an introduction on [Civilian Protection in Theory and Practice](#), authored by Walt Kilroy, Sukanya Podder and Allard Duursma.

Global Social Challenges Journal has issued a call for [Early Career Researchers in the Global South](#) to submit abstracts to the journal. Those selected will receive mentoring and will be exempt from Article Processing Charges.

Nonviolent Peaceforce has published a guide on [UCP and Safe Civic Spaces](#), which shows how UCP can be applied to protect civic spaces at demonstrations and similar events.

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