

Newsletter

Creating Safer Space

August 2024



Dear All,

The *Creating Safer Space* exhibition continues its journey around the world. It was on show in Colombia in June and July, and it is now on its way to Rio de Janeiro in Brazil. In each location, we use the exhibition to start conversations about the opportunities and challenges of unarmed civilian protection and community self-protection – scroll down to find out more.

We are also very happy to share two new publications. Learn about unarmed civilian protection in Colombia, and how Israeli settlers and occupation forces are ‘weaponising sheep’ to gain control of land and livelihoods in the West Bank.

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

Creating Safer Space Exhibition in Brazil

The *Creating Safer Space* exhibition will be travelling to Brazil in August. It will be on show in the Arts and Design Department of the Pontifical Catholic University in Rio de Janeiro (PUC-Rio) from 12 – 23 August 2024.

An exhibition launch will be held on 14 August from 3-5 pm, and there will be activities with students on 15 and 22 August. The workshops will focus unarmed civilian protection and community self-protection as an alternative protection and security mechanism that does not build on the use or threat of violence, and on the most appropriate - creative and participatory - methodologies to study such protection from below. They will also draw links with Brazil and see in how far *Creating Safer Space* learnings can be transferred to this setting.

The *Creating Safer Space* exhibition explores the unexpected power of nonviolence in the protection of civilians living in the midst of violence. 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.

The exhibition is also available online in the form of a [navigable 360° virtual tour](#), and it has previously been on show in Nairobi (Kenya), Bangkok (Thailand), Aberystwyth (UK), New York (USA) and Medellín (Colombia).



Creating Safer Space Exhibition in Colombia

The exhibition *Creating Safer Space* was on display at the Carlos Gaviria Library of the University of Antioquia during June and July.

We conducted three guided tours and a forum with the Corporación Jurídica Libertad (CJL). During the tours, we talked about unarmed civilian protection, community self-protection, and the role that art and non-violence play in these practices. In the forum with CJL, we discussed their research: [The Social Process of Guarantees of Antioquia, Colombia, an experience of unarmed civil protection with indigenous and peasant communities of Bajo Cauca](#) (a short film clip from CJL is available [here](#)).

Approximately fifty people participated in the tours and the forum, including twenty children from a school in Medellín who were visiting the University of Antioquia, students, and representatives of organizations such as the UNHCR and the Corporación Arlequín y los Juglares. More information about the exhibition is available [here](#).

These were the reflections of some of the attendees:

"We are not only violated by the presence of armed actors, whether legal or illegal, but also by economies that do not care about our territories and those of us who inhabit them. To protect civilians, we must also change the conditions in which the communities live"

- Zenú indigenous woman from Antioquia

"The creation of safer spaces does not depend on the state or the government, it depends on all of us."

- Nursing student, University of Antioquia

"To protect yourself or others, you don't need weapons."

- Nursing student, University of Antioquia



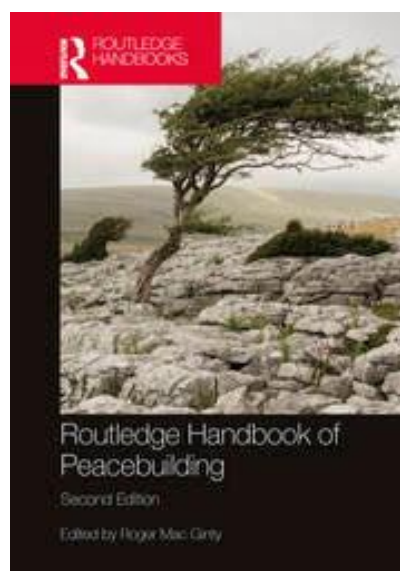
"The exhibition moved me and somehow took me back in time. As I saw in the exhibition, Colombia has not been unrelated to wars and violence. I grew up in the Santo Domingo Savio, a neighborhood in Medellín, between 1990 and 2000, a time marked by violence. Although I was four years old, I clearly remember the shootings that took place. My parents could only leave the house to work or buy food. I still remember several dead bodies lying on the street, face up and bloodied. Perhaps I did not live through conflicts of the magnitude of some of the countries in the exhibition. However, it is challenging to remember these experiences and acknowledge that many lives have been profoundly affected by war".

- Nursing student, University of Antioquia

Chapter in new Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding

Creating Safer Space Co-Investigator Beatriz Elena Arias-López and Research Assistant Laura Jiménez-Ospina will be publishing a chapter on Community Self-Protection in Colombia in the second edition of the [Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding](#), which is edited by *Creating Safer Space* Co-Investigator Roger Mac Ginty.

The chapter draws on *Creating Safer Space* research in Colombia. It examines unarmed civilian protection in Colombia whereby communities, human rights defenders, and others have come together to try to create safe spaces for non-combatants. The chapter looks at the mechanisms and processes involved in community self-protection, as well as a series of practical, and sometimes ethical, challenges that face such efforts. The lack of a clear demarcation between combatants and non-combatants poses a challenge, as does the issue of where unarmed civilian protectors fit in terms of legality and legitimacy. The chapter makes clear the multiple forms of agency and ingenuity that communities and activists engage in when faced with chronic conflict situations. The chapter is based on a close observation of the situation in Colombia but has resonance in other contexts.



[Routledge Handbook of Peacebuilding](#) will be published on 20 August 2024.

News from *Creating Safer Space* Projects



The *Creating Safer Space* project '[Safety and dignity: Enhancing unarmed civilian protection amongst Palestinian communities in the South Hebron Hills](#)' has published an article in *Rethinking Security*, [Weaponising Sheep: Israeli settler colonialism in the South Hebron Hills](#). The article shows how a slower burning form of violence is being perpetrated by settlers against Palestinian herders in the West Bank, seeking to gain control of their land and livelihoods.



The *Creating Safer Space* project '[Mapping and Responding to Vulnerability through Nonviolent Collective Actions in Buenaventura, Colombia](#)' has participated in an advocacy event in Bogotá. They shared their knowledge about the security and human rights situation and protection work in Buenaventura with a range of institutions, including the United Nations, the European Union, several national embassies, and the Peace Accords Implementation Unit. A short video is available [here](#).

External News

Morning Star has published an interview with *Creating Safer Space* Advisory Board member Ellen Furnari, [Beyond armed peacekeeping: the power of unarmed civilian protection](#). Amongst other things, the interview discusses *Creating Safer Space* research in Cameroon.

Nonviolent Peaceforce and the United Nations Population Fund have published [Preliminary Assessment Findings in South Kivu, Democratic Republic of the Congo](#), which

identifies key civilian protection risks, needs and responses and entry points for Unarmed Civilian Protection programming.

Nonviolent Peaceforce has published a report on [Food Security and Unarmed Civilian Protection](#).

Nonviolent Peaceforce has published a report, [Beyond Election Day: Unarmed Civilian Protection and Electoral Cycles](#).

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