Newsletter

Creating Safer Space

October 2026

Dear All,

We hope this edition of the CSS Newsletter finds you well!

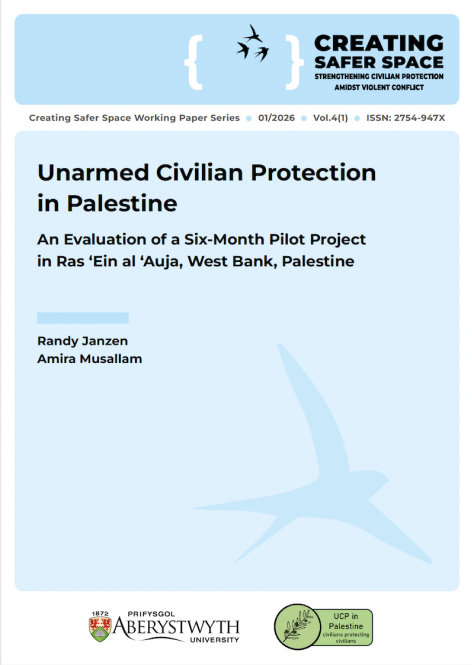
In this edition, you can:

- Immerse yourself in several new *Creating Safer Space* **publications** on Palestine and Colombia.
- Learn about **policy activities** in the UK and how *Creating Safer Space* **projects** have continued disseminating their work.
- Join us in **congratulating Rosemary Kabaki** on the award of an Honorary Doctorate.
- And submit a last-minute abstract to a **conference on the Protection of Civilians in Africa** in Buea, Cameroon, in November (abstract deadline: 20 October 2026).

We hope you will enjoy this update!

Your CSS Team

New *Creating Safer Space* publications



We are pleased to share our latest Creating Safer Space Working Paper (attached to this email):

Randy Janzen and Amira Musallam: ***Unarmed Civilian Protection in Palestine: An Evaluation of a Six-Month Pilot Project in Ras 'Ein al 'Auja, West Bank, Palestine***. Creating Safer Space Working 4(1), 2026.

The report presents the findings of a study conducted with the community of Ras 'Ein al 'Auja in the South Jordan Valley of the West Bank. Using a participatory evaluation method to determine the effectiveness of unarmed civilian protection, the study finds that the level of violence experienced by the community is worse than reported by other sources, while it confirms other reports' finding that the level of impunity of settler violence in the West Bank has reached a crisis level. The community of Ras 'Ein al 'Auja was forcibly displaced after months of resistance, yet community members still strongly believed in the effectiveness of unarmed civilian protection (UCP) in general. The authors conclude that more research and planning are needed to ensure UCP continues to adapt to the changing landscape of violence and impunity in the West Bank.

The team of the project "Community strategies for Unarmed Civilian Protection in South-West Colombia" has published two new articles co-written between academics and local researchers on the project. The first one is:

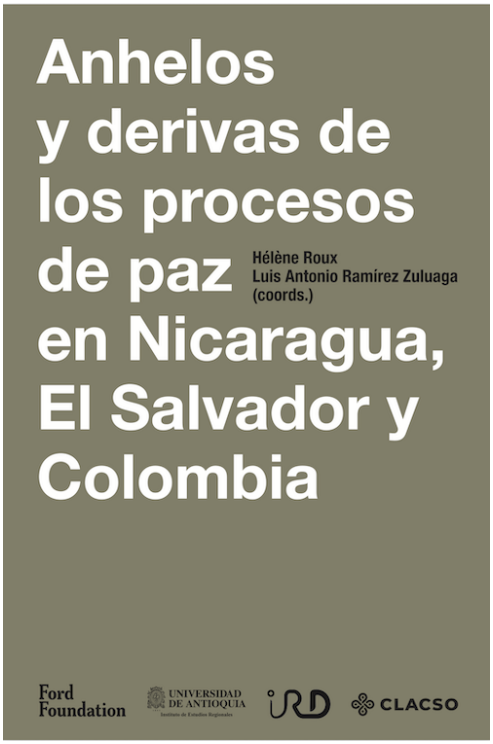
Adrián Alzate Garcia, Juan Mario Diaz-Arévalo, Jesus Alfonso Flórez López, Osmel Alexis Hoyos Buitrón, Simon Rushton, María Isabel Quintero Marín and Claudia Vanessa Rebolledo Ulcué: '**Collective defence of the *territorio*: Vernacular concepts and practices of security in Colombia's Pacific South-West.**' *Review of International Studies*. Published online 2026:1-20.

The article examines the ways in which three communities in South-West Colombia understand 'security' and the practices they adopt in pursuit of it. The authors show the centrality of *territorio* as the key referent object of security in the region, and a wide variety of collective efforts adopted by communities in pursuit of securing their *territorios*. Methodologically, they show how Participatory Action Research (PAR) can play a role in helping to build and sustain community-level collective security practices, bridging research and action. Conceptually, they show how understandings and practices of security in the region draw directly upon indigenous, mestizo and Afro-Colombian cultures, histories, and epistemologies – and in many respects do not conform to Western security registers often assumed to be universal.

The other new article by this research team is:

Natalia Campo, Juan Mario Díaz-Arévalo, Viviana Yussed Díaz Holguín, Claudia Vanessa Rebolledo Ulcué, Simon Rushton: '***Conversas* on the Territory: Participatory Video and Intergenerational Dialogue in Buenaventura and Caldono, Colombia.**' *Journal of Dialogue Studies* 14, 2026.

Afro-descendant and indigenous communities in the Pacific region of south-west Colombia have rich ancestral oral traditions that have long been central to the design and development of their collective life projects. However, these have been disrupted by both conflict and insecurity in the region and internal community dynamics, including feelings amongst young people that they are often unheard by an older generation of leaders, affecting intergenerational collaboration that has been central to communities' efforts at self-protection. The article examines the potential of Participatory Video (PV) to be a catalyst for intergenerational dialogue in this complex context.



The project "Water conflicts, violations and forms of self-protection" has published a new chapter on '**Hydroelectric licensing, territorial functionality and social violations'** (in Spanish):

Valderrama Arboleda, Mateo, and Hernán Darío Pineda Gómez, Licenciamientos hidroeléctricos, funcionalidad territorial y vulneraciones sociales: Estudio multicaso en el Oriente antioqueño (Colombia), in: *Anhelos y derivas de los procesos de paz en Nicaragua, El Salvador y Colombia*, ed. by Hélène Roux and Luis Antonio Ramírez Zuluaga, pp. 211-246 (Buenos Aires: CLACSO, 2026).

In their analysis of hydroelectric extractivism, the authors reflect on how these types of interventions affect the spatialities historically produced by rural communities in the Colombian countryside. They observe that the construction of this type of economic project is based on an approach in which the locations where hydroelectric infrastructure is built are conceived as empty or adaptable spaces. This perspective results in the negation of rural communities' life projects and territorial ties as implementation focuses on 'the monetisation of rivers as resources to be exploited', leading to various types of violations — physical, social, economic, environmental and legal. Social movements are emerging to defend the affected communities' autonomy and promote alternative uses of the territory, such as *campesino* agriculture or community-based tourism.

News from *Creating Safer Space* Network and Projects

On 15 July 2026, Rosemary Kabaki was awarded an Honorary Doctorate by Aberystwyth University. Rosemary is the Head of Mission of Nonviolent Peaceforce in South Sudan and has collaborated with the Creating Safer Space network in different ways, not least through her participation at the CSS final event in Nairobi, Kenya, in 2024.

In her presentation, Prof Berit Bliesemann de Guevara observed that 'Rosemary has embraced research as a strategy to grow knowledge and build community'. After summarising highlights of Rosemary's engagement with research for unarmed civilian protection, she concluded: 'This honorary doctorate is a unique opportunity to honour an individual who has built research into her work and has made a real difference to protecting people from physical harm and forced displacement, thereby definitely changing lives for the better.' You can read the full presentation HERE and see a video of the ceremony and Rosemary's acceptance speech HERE.

On 10 June 2026, the UK's **All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) on Conflict Prevention, Conflict Resolution, and Peacebuilding** and members of the Creating Safer Space research network held an event at the **UK Houses of Parliament** on **"Stories of Self-Protection: Centring Agency in the Protection of Civilians".**

The event built on the observation that at a time when the need to protect civilians from armed violence is more urgent than ever, the capacity and willingness of the international community to respond appears to be in decline. Building on evidence from the Creating Safer Space research network, the event highlighted the strategies and practices that individuals and communities use to protect themselves when international assistance is delayed, insufficient, or absent.

Moderated by Lord Jack McConnell, the event brought together academics, civil society practitioners, Members of Parliament, and civil servants to share evidence on community self-protection from conflict and atrocity contexts, and to identify priorities to strengthen UK policy and practice on community self-protection.

See HERE for a fuller report of the event and discussion.

In March 2026, **Dr Gillian McKay** (Leeds Beckett University) submitted evidence to an inquiry by the UK Parliament's International Development Committee into **"FCDO's approach to higher education and research partnerships"**.

Using Creating Safer Space as a case study, the submission highlights the benefits of international research partnerships. It finds that CSS has: i) enriched the academic evidence base, enhanced methodological capacities, and improved coherence of UCP as a field of research; ii) enabled communities to recognise, validate, and strengthen existing protection practices, and to apply them more intentionally, collectively, and confidently; iii) supported the translation of community knowledge into actionable frameworks, developed practitioner capacity and legitimacy, and enabled the integration and diffusion of UCP approaches across organisations and initiatives; iv) facilitated incremental incorporation of UCP principles into policy discussions and advisory processes; and v) enhanced the visibility and legitimacy of nonviolent approaches to protection and created an enabling environment for their uptake.

Access the full submission HERE.

Based on their book "Unarmed Civilian Protection in Palestine", team members Marwan Darweish, Mahmoud Soliman and Andrew Rigby of the project "Safety and dignity: Enhancing unarmed civilian protection amongst Palestinian communities in the South Hebron Hills" spoke at different seminars and conferences about protective presence in Palestine. This included:

- A webinar with 97 participants organised by the Green Olive Collective in August 2026. Active in the West Bank, Green Olive Collective is a global community of conscience that organises activities advancing democracy and human rights.
- A webinar with 90 participants organised by UK Friends of Standing Together in June 2025.
- Three UK seminars hosted by Palestine Forum, Palestine Solidarity Campaign in England and Scotland, and the University and College Union (UCU) retired members branch in the West Midlands between May and August 2026.
- A conference presentation at the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), London, June 2026.
- A presentation at the Resistance Studies conference, University of Massachusetts, Amherst/US, June 2026.

In March 2026, team members of the project "Exploring unarmed civilian self-protection in Cameroon's Anglophone conflict" organised an online panel and practitioner dialogue for Africa Week at King's College London under the title **"Operationalizing Agency Through Unarmed Civilian Protection: Community-Led Pathways to Safety and Peace"**, attended by c.100 online participants.

The event examined Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP) as a concrete framework through which agency is operationalized in contexts of conflict and insecurity. Drawing on the African case of Cameroon and wider insights, it explored how communities, local civil society actors, and international partners mobilise nonviolent strategies, social legitimacy, and relational resources to prevent violence, protect civilians, and contribute to sustainable peace, without reliance on armed force.

Watch a recording of the event **HERE**.

Preview: look forward to...

- ...the publications of the ***Creating Safer Space*** **impact report** by Dr Gillian McKay in the CSS Working Paper Series later in 2026.
- ...the publication of ***Creating Safer Space: Unarmed Community Self-Protection and Resistance Amidst Violent Conflict*** with contributors from 16 CSS projects (open access book, Bristol University Press, 2027).

External News

Call for Papers (see also email attachment):

Conference on "Regional Integration, International Humanitarian Law, and the Protection of Civilians in Africa: Strengthening Regional Mechanisms for Humanitarian Protection"

Faculty of Laws and Political Science, University of Buea, Cameroon; 27–28 November 2026.
Deadline for abstract submission: 20 October 2026

Podcast episode on UCP

Listen to an episode of the Nonviolent Jesus Podcast with podcast guest Mel Duncan, one of the founders of Nonviolent Peaceforce, on a range of UCP-related topics and experiences.

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