

## Civilians Caught in Crossfire: Your Impact

Early one morning, Nonviolent Peaceforce's (NP's) field team stationed in North Cotabato, Mindanao, Philippines received information about a rising armed tension in a nearby village. Elaysa Latiban, NP's field team leader and a local Filipino, hit the road with her team to conduct a security assessment of the area.

The day before, community members had tipped off NP that they had spotted 100 armed men moving towards the village.

previous dispute between two local commanders of the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF) that was previously settled, but lately has seen a resurgence," recounted Elaysa.

### Broken truce

While there is an ongoing process to integrate separatist MILF fighters into civilian life and peace, internal conflicts within the MILF forces still occur, threatening peace in the region.

One party in this conflict was led by Akas and the other by Kla, who had reached an agreement 4 years ago. However, allegedly, Akas' group

Nonviolent Peaceforce provided a safe passage to trapped civilians during a firefight between two leaders

"The escalating tension is deeply connected to a



breached the deal. Elaysa shared that “Akas’ group would intimidate Kla’s group by forcing its constituents to share their crops during harvest time... the attacks were part of Akas’ plan to reclaim his land in the area.”

### **Civilians Trapped in the Crossfire**

The NP team arrived in the village around 9:30 in the morning and met with the village captain, the highest elected government official in the community. They gathered updates on the security of civilians in the area and



NP team following up with the parties of the conflict and monitoring the situation on the ground after the conflict.

learned the firefights between the Akas and Kla groups were taking place in the border of the village.

Elaysa recalled, “Upon reaching the border, we heard sporadic firing of guns and were surprised to see approximately 30 vehicles with civilians onboard, including child passengers, caught in the middle of the road and unable to pass through.”

Well-known in the area, NP immediately jumped into action and accompanied the parade of vehicles and motor riders to safety. No more gunfire was heard during the trip back to safety.



### **You Protect Before, During, and After Conflict**

Since NP had established relationships with key actors on the ground before the conflict, the team was able to talk to all sides and significantly influence another conflict resolution initiative.

Additionally, one of the internal conflict mediators shared that he “was able to apply the protective presence training I received from NP in order to protect civilians in this case.”

Not only did NP protect civilians from the crossfire, but the team continued to work after the fight to support conflict resolution by providing protective presence in the series of negotiations following the firefight. And, NP joined the ceasefire committee to ensure there is no further retaliation between Akas and Kla.

Thanks to supporters like you, when asked what was the positive outcome of the day, Elaysa answered, “NP’s nonpartisanship and independence had prevailed in the situation. It led to the successful protection of civilians against the conflicting parties.” ➡



# *How You've Protected Communities in the United States*



Photo: Cole Witter

**In New York City:** Among other events, NP Staff ran a safety team of more than 100 volunteers for the Brooklyn Liberation Action to #ProtectTransYouth. Over a period of 9 hours, the team provided unarmed civilian protection for thousands, with a special focus on the Black Trans youth at the event.



"We went through the training and now we're downtown protecting the people. We came as one and we left as one with unity and no violence."

- Community Leader trained by NP

Photo: NP | Twin Cities

**In the Twin Cities:** Your support made it possible for NP to train community members on unarmed civilian protection (187 community members in person and 200+ additional community members trained online)!

Our trained volunteers and NP Staff protected civilians during the Derek Chauvin Trial, after Daunte Wright was killed, and other community events like the Somali Independence Day Festival.



# *Message from Myanmar*

As the situation in Myanmar continues to unfold, NP staff and our partners are faced with an urgent situation: the dangers of the pandemic surge, all during a military takeover. On the other hand, our staff and the people of Myanmar remain resilient. While some of us have not been able to get back into the country, we are not giving up on Myanmar. Thank you for your continued support.



Photo: Reuters

## *Make Peace Your Legacy*

*Did you know there's one simple step you can take today to care for your loved ones, protect your community, and help us build a nonviolent future — and it's completely free? FreeWill makes creating a legal will accessible to all, and even helps you plan an optional legacy with Nonviolent Peaceforce!*

*Showing your love and care for the communities, you can bring peace of mind when the world is facing so much hardship. Create your free will and community legacy today: <https://bit.ly/3ATfJH2> or on our website.*



*For more information on ways to give,  
go to [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org) or contact our office at 612-871-0005.*

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