



Peace in Sight

TRANSFORMING THE WORLD'S RESPONSE TO CONFLICT

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Youth Protection Team, Juba IDP Camp, South Sudan. 2025. ©NP

The Day the Violence Didn't Happen



How youth in Juba IDP camp interrupted gang violence before it began.

On the evening of January 16th, NP's Early Warning Early Response committee received alarming news: a gang within an internally displaced persons (IDP) camp was organizing an attack targeting Sudanese traders in the marketplace.

Recently, widespread violence had broken out against Sudanese communities in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. The unrest was sparked by reports of ethnically motivated killings of South Sudanese civilians in a nearby town—but tensions had already been running high. By January, civil war in neighboring Sudan had forced over one million people to seek refuge in South Sudan, straining already limited resources. The news of the gang's planned attack had the potential to be another deadly manifestation of these tensions.

When the NP team heard of the planned attack, ten young IDPs—members of the camp's Youth

Protection Teams (YPTs)—sprang into action. Despite the tense atmosphere, the four young women and six young men put their bright yellow YPT vests on and set out for the market.

There, they encountered the gang, with one gang member visibly distraught. He had lost contact with his three brothers in Sudan and feared they had been killed.

"Let's attack the Sudanese business people at market checkpoints, kill them, and exact revenge on our loved ones if you are all experiencing the same pain as I am," he urged the others. With weapons in hand, the gang began advancing towards the market checkpoint.



One life lost will be one too many.



The ten YPT members—aged 16 to 25—quickly approached the gang leaders and began speaking with them. They advised against retaliation and pointed out that the Sudanese

community were themselves survivors of a vicious conflict and were not complicit in the incident days earlier.

The gang members were familiar with the yellow vests. For several years, the Youth Protection Team had been engaging with them, offering training and awareness sessions on nonviolent communication, child protection, and the root causes of gang violence. Several former gang members who had renounced violence had even joined the YPTs—three of whom were present that day.

After a lengthy and emotional conversation, the gang leaders began to reconsider. They realized that the Sudanese people they planned to harm were simply going about their day, trying to survive, just like them. The gang leaders instructed their members to return to the camp peacefully and even joined the YPTs in speaking with other gang factions to prevent further retaliation.

To ensure the gangs kept their promise, the ten YPT members remained at the market checkpoint throughout the day. All shops had shut down due to the security threat, and the youth had only the nearby borehole for water—but they held their ground, offering a protective presence to anyone in need.

It's impossible to know how many lives might have been lost if the gangs had gone forward with their attack, or what further violence it could have sparked. But thanks to the courage and commitment of the YPT members, countless Sudanese refugees were kept safe that day—including a Sudanese baker.

Facing threats from members of the host community outside of the IDP camp, the baker had been stranded in his shop during the market shutdown. Through their presence, the young YPTs deterred any would-be attackers and escorted the baker to the authorities for further protection.

The Power of Showing Up

Though NP's capacity to support Youth and Community Protection Teams in Juba has been strained by civil war and global funding cuts to humanitarian work, the team that remains continues to “dig in,” says Rosemary Kabaki, NP Head of Mission in South Sudan.

“We have had that [Juba IDP] camp surrounded by military actors in an attempt to contain the communities there,” she said. “But I am watching the team digging in. What gives us the energy to do that? When the camp manager called us and said, ‘NP, are you still here? Because if you stop coming they are going to shoot on us, they are going to kill us.’”

The fact that we go around and patrol and that we are there creates the presence to stop as a deterrent to more violence against the civilians. On hearing that, we then had not only program staff but operational staff—the finance manager, the logistics guy—create a schedule for protective presence in the camp. That's what we can do.”



Left: Rosemary Kabaki at the European Humanitarian Forum. May, 2025. Right: Felicity Gray's opening remarks at a Protection of Civilians week side event, NY, NY. May, 2025.

Smartwatches for Safety

A FAST AND FLEXIBLE RESPONSE FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES IN UKRAINE

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, not everyone hears the warning before the bombing strikes. For people with hearing impairments, air raid sirens offer no protection. And civilians, whether hearing impaired or not, often have just two to three minutes after the siren sounds to take shelter before impact. This short window can mean the difference between life and death—and without accessible alerts, those with hearing or visual impairments are robbed of the chance to act and protect themselves.

After receiving an urgent request from the Ukrainian Society for the Deaf, NP worked quickly with our local partners to come up with a solution. Within one month, the team purchased the necessary equipment and delivered smartwatches equipped with vibration and light alerts tailored to people with hearing impairments.



Smartwatch recipients, Ukraine. 2025. ©NP

“There are four people in my family and we are all deaf,” shared Iryna, one of the recipients of a smartwatch. “This is a form of support for us. It is our safety—to be able to take shelter, and for that, we need information. Thank you.”

Today, 60 people who were previously left out of early warning systems are better protected.

Civilian Protection Through Advocacy

Now in its eighth year, Protection of Civilians (PoC) Week, May 19 - 23, brings together governments, UN bodies, NGOs, and communities affected by conflict to share tools, strategies, and insights to better protect civilians.

As an organization grounded in Unarmed Civilian Protection (UCP), Nonviolent Peaceforce was there—sharing stories, lessons from the ground, and policy recommendations that show what's possible when civilians are seen as leaders in their own protection.

For a look inside the room, read this excerpt from NP Global Head of Policy and Advocacy Felicity Gray's opening remarks at a PoC week side event.

“When civilians speak about protection, they are clear that this means an end to violence, sustained through accountability for harm. ‘We invite you to protect us’, was the plea from Palestinian children holding their own press conference in November 2023—now 18 months ago.

In reflecting on our responsibility to speak out and act—as member states, as INGOs, as UN agencies, as humanitarians—as human beings—let's not hide behind oblique references to complexity, patting ourselves on the back for the bare minimum. Let us critically reflect on the roles we play in upholding harm, how we can be courageous in pushing for justice, and ask ourselves some hard questions: Whose voices matter? Who are we platforming and amplifying? Whose voices are we listening to? What is the critical mass, the chorus we need to compel action?”

SUPPORTER SPOTLIGHT



2024 Trip with NP Team

Join our next trip to the Philippines, November 3–11, to see nonviolence in action. Contact Anna Zaros, NP's Director of Advancement, at azaros@nonviolentpeaceforce.org.

Last year, sisters and long-time Nonviolent Peaceforce supporters Jeanne and Julie embarked on a 10-day journey to the Philippines to witness how nonviolence is creating lasting change.

"The variety of people we were able to meet was awesome, from NP staff to local peaceworkers to former combatants and government officials. We really learned so much about the struggles in Mindanao," Julie reflected. Among the most memorable encounters were with the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade—former combatants who are now leading efforts in reconciliation and community healing. "The stories of the women were especially inspiring," Jeanne shared. "I continue to think of them often."

After 10 days, Julie said, "I came away with a greater understanding of NP's important work, and a hope that there can be 'Peace on Earth.'"

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I would say our trip to the Philippines was one of the most meaningful I have ever taken.

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Planning Through Uncertainty

Visit nonviolentpeaceforce.org/planned-gifts for more information.

One of the most meaningful ways you can support the causes you care about is through making a legacy gift. In these uncertain times, taking the time to consider what options are best for you—from bequests to Qualified Charitable Distributions—can take the stress out of planning for the future while ensuring your values can live on for generations to come.

If you'd like to make a legacy gift, but don't know where to start, contact Anna Zaros, NP Director of Advancement, at 612-871-0005 x226 or azaros@nonviolentpeaceforce.org.



Tree planting. Ninewa, Iraq. ©NP

For more information on ways to give, go to NonviolentPeaceforce.org or call +1 612-871-0005