

Dear All,

We are delighted to announce our new *Creating Safer Space* Working Paper, which explores unarmed civilian protection in Cameroon's Anglophone conflict. We believe this to be the most comprehensive study of UCP in Cameroon to date, uncovering a wide array of community self-protection practices hitherto unknown to the UCP community. This working paper also shows the power of exploring conflict through art – have a look at the poems and drawings for a glimpse into people's experiences of community self-protection.

We are also very happy to report on our engagements in the USA: our exhibition at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, our research dissemination work in Washington D.C., and our 'Spaces for Peace' event at the City University of New York.

Finally, we are delighted to report from our projects in Colombia and Papua, who are sharing their research findings through publications and interviews.

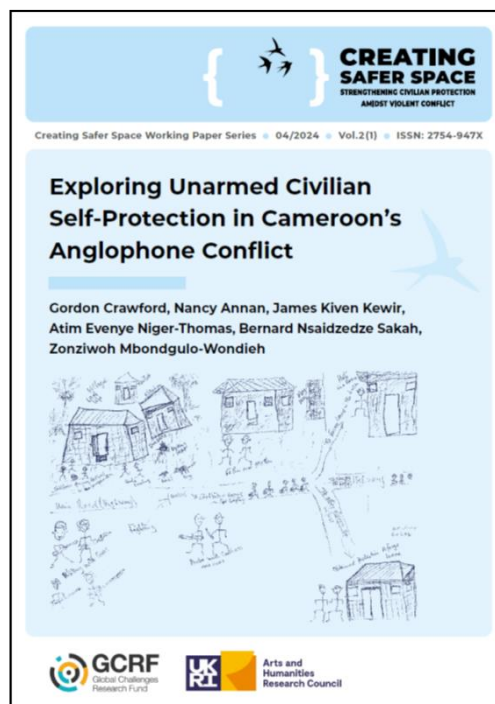
Creating Safer Space is an international research network, which aims to understand and support unarmed civilian protection and self-protection amidst violent conflict.

New Working Paper on UCP in Cameroon

The *Creating Safer Space* network has published a new working paper, "[Exploring Unarmed Civilian Self-Protection in Cameroon's Anglophone Conflict](#)". The Working Paper is written by Gordon Crawford, Nancy Annan, James Kiven Kewir, Atim Evenye Niger-Thomas, Bernard Nsaidzedze Sakah and Zonziwoh Mbongdulo-Wondieh.

The working paper presents the findings of the *Creating Safer Space* project, "[Exploring unarmed civilian self-protection in Cameroon's Anglophone conflict](#)".

It explores the unarmed civilian self-protection measures taken by individuals and communities who live in the midst of ongoing armed conflict in Cameroon's two English-speaking regions. This conflict has received limited attention and support from regional and international actors, and civilians have found their own ways to protect themselves from violence. The researchers have uncovered a wide array of informal and innovative grassroots measures of community self-protection. The team used participatory art-based methods of data collection, and many of the poems and drawings produced by the research participants illustrate the wider findings in the working paper.



We welcome proposals for the [Creating Safer Space Working Paper Series](#). Please contact creating-safer-space@aber.ac.uk if you are interested in publishing a working paper with us.

Creating Safer Space at the United Nations

The *Creating Safer Space* exhibition was on display inside the United Nations Headquarters in New York from 29 April – 3 May, at the Delegates' Entrance.

The exhibition includes objects, images, and voices from *Creating Safer Space* research projects, and explores the unexpected power of nonviolence in the protection of civilians living in the midst of violence.



(Photo: Ramón Campos)

Prof. Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, Prof. Rachel Julian and Prof. Nerve Macaspac accompanied the exhibition, and informed UN delegates, UN staff, and other interested stakeholders about *Creating Safer Space* research. They shared the [Creating Safer Space policy briefs](#) on the potential role of Unarmed Civilian Protection in the Protection of Civilians (PoC) and [other publications from Creating Safer Space projects](#).

Visitors described the exhibition as timely and important, and some raised personal reflections on the artwork. A member of a UN mission from a country in Africa remarked that the use of whistles as a method of early warning and early response, as illustrated by our exhibition material from Cameroon and South Sudan, was also used in their own country – and this practice had once saved their life.

An exhibition event was held on Tuesday 30 April for members of UN missions and other interested parties, with drinks, food and introductory speeches. Prof. Arlene Tickner, Ambassador of the Colombian Mission to the UN in New York, highlighted that, “[o]ne of the most fascinating things about this project, I think, is not only its work with communities affected by violence, but also the insistence on nonviolent mechanisms of protection and self protection to accompany civilians in contexts of violence and conflict”. Prof. Berit Bliesemann de Guevara highlighted how *Creating Safer Space* research across 11 countries has shown that we can find community-level unarmed civilian protection everywhere. Civilians are not just victims waiting to be saved by strangers – they are protectors in their own right – and these nonviolent protection strategies work in making people safer across a range of different violent contexts.



(Photo: Ramón Campos)

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the United Nations, for being our official sponsor, for all their help in making the week a success, and for enabling us to bring community voices from around the world to this global centre of power.

Creating Safer Space in Washington D.C.

Rachel Julian and Berit Bliesemann de Guevara also travelled to Washington, DC, from 5-9 May 2024 to share *Creating Safer Space* insights. With the help of local UCP Community of Practice members, they presented the findings and projects to policymakers and peace advocacy organisations.

Among the highlights was a roundtable organised by Alliance for Peacebuilding attended by c.30 people from around the world with an interest in de-escalating violence and local peacebuilding. In a meeting with the Friends Committee On National Legislation, Rachel and Berit spoke about the importance of *Creating Safer Space* research and projects to current crises and the need to work together to bring new ideas and thinking into discussion on how to create spaces of safety and peace. Rachel and Berit also talked to several people from the policymaking space on preventing violence, atrocity prevention, and civilian protection about how UCP in and by communities could fit into their work. The Network's concrete examples of what people do and how safer spaces are used in communities helped these policymakers and practitioners understand the importance of thinking more about how we support community-led UCP and unarmed self-protection.

‘Spaces of Peace’ Event in New York

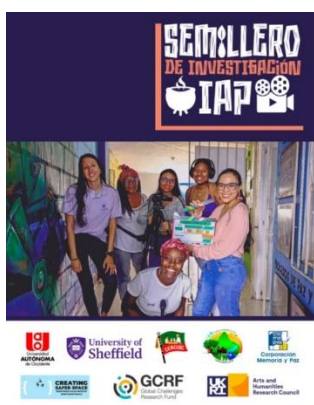
“Spaces of Peace: A Gathering of a Community of Practice” was held on 10 May 2024 at the Graduate Center, City University of New York (CUNY) in Manhattan, New York City. This event was attended by leaders of non-profit organizations and individual researchers based in New York and Los Angeles who are engaged in the promotion or research of nonviolent, unarmed or abolitionist practices of community self-protection. Participating organizations include the Alliance for Community Transit - Los Angeles (ACT-LA) and Nonviolent Peaceforce.

The gathering aimed at fostering a dialogue between international practices of unarmed civilian protection and local unarmed, nonviolent or abolition movements in the U.S. Key themes discussed by participants include the shared practices and challenges of international practices of unarmed civilian protection and the work of abolition locally, the kinds of infrastructures and relationships required in sustaining the work of abolition, and ways of expanding solidarity as a community of practice of unarmed community protection across different spaces and places. Participants also viewed and reflected upon three documentary films from the *Creating Safer Space* research network: *Civil protection to stay on our land: Palestine* (director: Mahmoud Makrameh), *Minga* (Director: Malala Lekander), and *When a Young Blood Bleeds* (Producers: Spontaneous the Poet, Martha Okumu, Rachel Akinyi, Peace Tree Network).

The gathering was co-organized by Prof. Nerve Macaspac, Co-Investigator for *Creating Safer Space* research network, and Flip Zang, a PhD student of Earth and Environmental Sciences (EES) at the Graduate Center. Prof. Berit Bliesemann de Guevara, Principal Investigator of *Creating Safer Space*, and Prof. Rachel Julian, Co-Investigator, participated at the event and provided an overview of the 26 research projects funded by the network and updates from the recent *Creating Safer Space* exhibition at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York.



News from *Creating Safer Space* Projects



The *Creating Safer Space* project [‘Community strategies for Unarmed Civilian Protection in South-West Colombia: local experiences and lessons learned’](#) has published the [IAP Research Seedbed Curriculum](#). This toolbox is one of the results of the process of training local researchers in participatory action research (PAR). The local researchers then led the creation and training of research seedbeds in the city of Buenaventura and the communities of Caldono and Lerma in Cauca. This curriculum is a testimony to the significant contributions of local researchers and seedbeds to the research and practice of security, protection and care strategies in their communities. This publication is currently only available in Spanish, but an English language edition will follow soon.



Arfiansyah, the Co-Investigator of the *Creating Safer Space* project '[Civilian \(Self-\) Protection from Violent Conflict in Papua: Exploring Local Infrastructures and Initiatives](#)', was interviewed by Dr Mukhlisuddin Ilyas, Director of Bandar Publishing, on [Sagoe TV Podcast](#). Arfiansyah discussed his research activities with Nonviolent Peaceforce of the Philippines in Papua, in Maesot on the Thai border with Myanmar, and in Kachin and Northern Shan states of Myanmar, with an emphasis on the research in Papua. Arfiansyah provided a comparative perspective on the challenge of doing research in conflict areas, and introduced UCP to local audiences who are not yet familiar with the concept.



The *Creating Safer Space* project '[Development of civil protection capacities in women displaced by the armed conflict through popular communication and Community Legal Empowerment](#)' met with the International Women's Peace Group (IWPG) on May 7th to discuss one of their project outputs, a [transmedia booklet on civil protection for women victims of armed conflict](#). IWPG, based in South Korea, aims to resolve conflicts through women's peace education. They agreed to collaborate on promoting a gender-focused culture of peace through UCP in Colombia.

External News

National Catholic Reporter has published an article by Marie Dennis, '[If there is an Israel-Hamas cease-fire, unarmed civilian protectors should be sent in](#)'. The article cites the [Creating Safer Space UCP Research Database](#).

Nonviolent Peaceforce has released a new video, '[We are Nonviolent Peaceforce](#)', which shows the role of unarmed protection in achieving sustainable peace and enhancing the capacity of communities to handle conflicts without violence.

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