



Editorial

Peoples' Movements: The unsung peace negotiators

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We all too often see the victims and horrors of war on our television sets and in the newspapers. What we do not see are the people who in their daily lives are living and surviving the conflict. Who, with families and friends and even enemies, are building their society anew, finding ways to confront and move on from the past, overcome the bitterness and transform it into peace.

In this journal issue the spotlight is on the peoples' groups who work together in their community, across the traditional fighting lines, beyond the war zones, to remake their society and even culture for a sustainable future.

These are the people who do not make the headlines but who are the ones who are building the new fabric of society with vision and years of hard work. The youth in Cyprus and the Middle East who work together to respect each other's religion, language and culture. The Northern Irish who are trying to end the 'troubles' in a vast array of civil society projects across religious and political divides. The people working for Angolan peace who are tired of war, tired of poverty and want international support for themselves, not for those who control their country's resources. The children of Colombia who are demanding an end to daily violence and showing the adults around them ways that could lead to peace. Women in all corners of the world who want a say in peace negotiations and who are embracing women on the 'other' side as they search for ways to rebuild shattered bodies, family lives and hopes. Rural communities in El Salvador working together to build a bridge back into mainstream life. Weary and silenced women in Chiapas who ask for the 'right to rest' from their exhausting and violated lives.

These and the other stories in the journal tell of struggle, of tiredness but also of vision and innovation. And in all of these stories there are the courageous risks taken and the enterprising methods developed to forge a common ground, embrace the other, find acceptance for the past and hope for the future.

Brian Urquhart, writing in the 27 April *New York Review of Books*, boldly states that the UN's role is to fight evil (his words) – the ethnic conflicts, genocides, wars and tyrannies of the nation states. He sees civil society principally through the internet ensuring the influence of activists and concerned citizens throughout the world to reinforce what he describes as the lonely call of UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to achieve changes in behaviour and attitude of people and nations, to ensure international and human security with the rights of the human individual as paramount. This journal maps out the depth of that activity of civil society. And it is one that goes beyond what Sir Brian would no doubt imagine. From the many examples of peoples' movements in this journal we have a very forceful picture of how civil society, the people in peoples' movements, are key to negotiating peace and in rebuilding society afterwards, not just using cyberspace but in their day-to-day reality, their networking, their support and reaching out to others with similar needs and hopes.

The journal chronicles the unsung but very needed work to recover trust, sustainability

economy, livelihoods and life together. In almost all the cases covered the formal peace processes have not been entirely successful and have not been smooth. Therefore there has been a need, alongside the formal political negotiations, for peoples' movements to open up other avenues to achieve peace. Parallel to the political process, along with The Hague Appeal's new democratic diplomacy and the call for a reinforced UN, we need these peoples' movements working across divides, making changes, reaching out to find their own voice and identity in psychologically and socially very trying circumstances

The journal assembles an array of people over a vast geographic sweep but, even so, it touches just a fraction of the work that peoples' movements are doing. We hope, even with these limitations, it can be a resource from which we can learn and gather hope when we are confronted with the endlessly bleak media coverage of death and destruction. The issue is a testament to the peoples' groups that are confronting 'evil' within their own community and who are transforming it into a pathway for peace and social justice.