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From

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For the Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding theme.

Title: Peacekeeping without weapons: how unarmed civilian peacekeeping challenges our understanding of how we protect civilians.

Abstract.

Evidence from decades of work by NGO's, OSCE and some UN missions shows that many of the tasks of peacekeepers can be done by unarmed civilians without the need for violence or threats of violence.

Military peacekeeping today is mostly concerned with intrastate conflicts and most missions operate in areas where the state is unable and/or unwilling to effectively protect all its citizens. As peacekeeping forces themselves have increasingly struggled to protect civilians in these areas, there are calls for more robust peacekeeping using greater military force. However employing nonviolent strategies reveals other effective options.

Unarmed civilian peacekeeping challenges mainstream ideas that protection from direct violence can only be delivered through violence and threats of violence. Unarmed Civilian Peacekeeping uses nonviolent theory and strategies to enable civilians to protect one another in the midst of violent conflict. Peace Brigades International and Nonviolent Peaceforce use some or all of UCP strategies including patrolling, proactive presence, accompaniment, monitoring, early warning and response, and local capacity development. While many of these strategies are also used by military and police peacekeepers, recent research suggests that good relationships may be a core element for effectiveness, and being unarmed can contribute to forming good relationships.

Whilst military force is seen as the fall back strategy to provide security and protection to civilians, evidence from unarmed civilian peacekeepers is that their methods and approaches are effective at saving lives and creating community protection mechanisms. Drawing on case studies from Mindanao and Georgia and recent research with frontline peacekeepers, this paper argues that incorporating unarmed civilian peacekeepers into existing peacekeeping mechanisms will contribute to more effective peacekeeping and more sustainable efforts to support communities in keeping the peace for the long term.