

  
Berghof Foundation



50  
years  
of conflict  
transformation





**Berghof Foundation**



In memory of Georg Zundel,  
the founder of the Berghof Foundation



50 years  
of conflict  
transformation

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Cover: Our work aims to create space for conflict transformation. Two chairs in the Berghof office in Berlin create an invitation to dialogue.

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## Foreword by the Executive Director

The Berghof Foundation is a very special organisation — an intellectual and ethical space unlike any other.

In 2021, in new premises, under new management, using new methods and operating in a world utterly different from what it was when Berghof's visionary founder created it half a century ago, one can still see in today's far larger organisation some of the elements that made it special back then. Deep pride in the organisation's work on peacebuilding, mediation and other forms of conflict transformation has been a constant feature.

Established to help reduce East-West tensions at the height of the Cold War, its willingness and ability to adapt to changing circumstances have always been Berghof's strengths, while its fundamental goals and principles have stayed the same. The fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the subsequent disintegration of some major states led to key changes: as a result of the wars in former Yugoslavia and the Caucasus, Berghof shifted its focus towards intra-state conflicts.

The ill-conceived "Global War on Terror" after 2001 brought further shifts, with our work focusing on resistance and liberation movements that wanted support in negotiations, and on making societies more inclusive.

More recently, Berghof has been adapting to a digitalised world in which mass disinformation and hate speech have become hallmarks; to a planet facing ecocide through climate change; to the uncertainties and constraints brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic; and to dramatic changes in the status and postures of world superpowers.

Our founder Georg Zundel created and supported a number of institutions. In 2012, three of them were merged into one. This has meant that the current Berghof Foundation is now based on a triad of complementary activities — one of the features of Berghof that make us truly unique —

combining operational support for regional peace initiatives; practical research into multiple layers of conflict transformation; and global learning with peace education.

During its five decades of intensive work, Berghof has managed to build up a solid reputation in two broad areas. The first is its intellectual and practical competence; the second is the ethical underpinnings that lie behind its activities. For Berghof staff, peace has always signified much more than the absence of violent conflict, and this is why such emphasis is placed on dealing systemically with the complex structural, root causes of conflict in all their forms. Working on a number of mediation and peacebuilding tracks, Berghof constantly analyses evolving conditions in the areas, countries and regions where it operates. And then it puts its ideas into effect using a wide variety of approaches and techniques, including grassroots reconciliation and peace education, participatory research and policy reviews, and high-level dialogue and mediation support. The aim is to tackle the underlying causes of conflicts — human rights violations, exclusion and discrimination, as well as manipulation of historical narratives — thereby reducing tensions and transforming conflicts.

Reviewing the record, one can identify four broad strokes of good fortune that seem to have consistently helped Berghof on its peacebuilding path. The first is the quality and commitment of its staff since the very beginning. The second is the unstinting support of the founder and his family. The third is our long-standing cooperation with many dedicated partners in conflict contexts around the world. And the fourth is that we are based in a country which, to my mind, has an unmatched record in dealing with its own past and in implementing a foreign policy that strongly promotes mediated peace, human rights, democracy and environmental values — although this does not mean that over the decades, especially in our earlier years, Berghof has not criticised German policy whenever it felt that this was necessary. Our organisation continues to receive generous project funding, mainly from the German Federal Foreign Office, as well as from a number of other important donors. We are deeply grateful to everyone concerned in all four areas.

In the pages that follow, which are based on contributions received from most of the approximately 100 staff who currently work for the organisation, we have attempted to provide a flavour of Berghof's work over the past 50 years, and show what it is really about. It demonstrates great breadth of activity and an extremely impressive record of achievement. Building on the foundational work of our predecessors, of whom we are so proud, and on the efforts of our colleagues in the field, and learning from all our experiences, both good and bad, we have little doubt that whatever form our 100th anniversary takes, it will reflect a record that is truly remarkable.



Andrew Gilmour  
Executive Director  
Berghof Foundation

Berlin  
Summer 2021



# Presenting Berghof





# A life for peace

The book you are holding in your hands provides an overview of the Berghof Foundation's work and impact over the past 50 years. However, none of it would have been possible without the vision, courage and generous support of our founder, Prof. Dr. Georg Zundel. He established the Berghof Foundation in 1971 and enabled us to grow and continue our work also after his passing in 2007. This book is dedicated to him.

Born in Tübingen, Germany, on 17 May 1931, Georg Zundel was confronted from an early age with an environment which would shape his convictions and ideals and ignited a passion for the three themes that would remain central to him throughout his life — peace, the sciences, and agriculture and forestry.

It was his parental home and the political developments during his childhood and adolescence that were particularly formative for Georg Zundel. He was brought up in a political household at the Berghof, an Art Nouveau country house that his parents, the painter and farmer Georg Friedrich Zundel and Paula Bosch, had built on the edge of Schönbuch forest, overlooking the university town of Tübingen. Intellectual and physical work characterised life at the Berghof, where Georg Zundel soon developed an understanding of the social and political tensions of the time and learned to appreciate nature and the value of agriculture.

The rural idyll of the Berghof, which was to lend its name to many of Georg Zundel's later ventures, stood in stark contrast to the horrors that were about to unfold in Germany. The experience of totalitarianism and the terrors of the Second World War left a deep mark on Georg Zundel and instilled in him a deep conviction that led him to continue the political and pacifist tradition of his grandfather, renowned German entrepreneur Robert Bosch,

and his father's first wife, Clara Zetkin, a women's rights activist and socialist politician.

In his memoirs, Georg Zundel wrote: "The violent confrontation of the Second World War [...] resulted in my resistance to rearmament, my involvement in the anti-nuclear movement and finally the establishment of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Research. [...] Our youth today lacks such experiences. It therefore seems to me to be of the utmost importance to raise awareness of the conflicts smoldering in society and to work out strategies that will make it possible to resolve these conflicts peacefully."

He actively opposed the rearmament of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949 and took part in protests against the arming of the German military with nuclear weapons in the years 1958 to 1961. As the founder of the Berghof Foundation, he became "the most important private promoter of peace and conflict research in Germany," as his longtime colleague, fellow peace researcher Reiner Steinweg, wrote in his obituary. In 2003, Georg Zundel's commitment to peace was honoured with the Grand Cross of the Order of Merit of the Federal Republic of Germany.

Beyond his passionate commitment to peace, Georg Zundel pursued a successful career as a scientist. A trained physicist known for his contribution to the field of hydrogen bond research, he had a thirst for scientific discovery that transcended boundaries and whose aim was the practical application of research results. To that end, he founded the Berghof Group, a technology company and innovation hub, which celebrated its 50th anniversary five years ago. In accordance with his pacifist ideals, he would not allow the company to carry out any research or development in the

armaments sector. Georg Zundel was profoundly convinced that natural sciences, innovation and business shared a strong social responsibility to serve humanity. This responsibility extended to scientists themselves, who in his view were obliged to consider the ethical implications of their work. At the same time, he was strongly attracted to a universalistic understanding of science across political divides, which he actively pursued by building strong and often personal links to scientists in the Soviet Union and Poland. Natural sciences, business and ethics were inseparable to Georg Zundel; in that sense, he was clearly ahead of his time.

A central part of his belief in thinking beyond disciplinary boundaries and always keeping the greater good in mind was his attempt to build bridges between the natural sciences and peace work. While this did not always meet with a positive response in the early years of the Berghof Foundation's existence, it is today more relevant than ever. In light of the immense challenges that climate change poses to peace, finding scientifically sound ways of integrating the latest findings of climate change research into peace work is not only a strategic priority for the Berghof Foundation but also the best way to honour our founder's legacy.

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Alone, we can achieve  
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Chair of the Board  
of Trustees of the  
Berghof Foundation

50 years ago, your father Georg Zundel founded the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies with the vision to advance critical, independent peace research and to question the mainstream political and academic discourse with its strong focus on security. What motivated your father to take this step?

The vision and spirit that drove my father to set up the Berghof Foundation in 1971 were very much shaped by his own life experience and the historical context of post-war Germany during the Cold War. The imminent prospect of another even more deadly military confrontation created a widespread and urgently felt need for alternatives. For my father, who actively participated in the German peace movement in the 1960s, protest alone was not enough. As a scientist, he was optimistic that thorough and serious research on the root causes and dynamics of political conflict would enable viable and practical solutions to be found. It is important to understand that what he had in mind was not a theoretical endeavour, but a means to equip political actors with the tools to make a difference. The importance of practically relevant research and active political and educational work was therefore already enshrined in the Foundation's first statutes, adopted in 1971.

You mentioned your father's focus on research on issues relating to the Cold War in post-war Germany. Since the 1990s, the Berghof Foundation has evolved from being a supporter of conflict research in Germany into a non-governmental organisation running projects internationally and with an apparent focus on practice. Where do you still see your father's spirit and vision reflected in our work?

In part, this development has been an outcome of success. What had started as a controversial project that was often framed as leftist had succeeded in reaching out to the political mainstream. And with the end of the Cold War, the political context had changed. So we started to search for an active and constructive role internationally — similar, in fact, to what Germany itself was doing. Along with that, practice took on a more dominant role in our work. The existing focus on action research and peace education pointed the way. However, despite the present predominance of practice-related projects, the Berghof Foundation

is, at its heart, still a research organisation. We do care a great deal about concepts and we try to reflect systematically on our work. We continuously strive to better integrate research with our practical work, and very much believe in reflected practice. There can be no learning otherwise. And that is very much in keeping with my father's spirit.

In this book, we present a number of stories showing where our work has made an impact. What is your most memorable success story personally? What are you most proud of?

I vividly recall when we started our work with resistance and liberation movements. It began with an action research project involving participants from a number of armed groups, who under the guidance of our researchers wrote papers on topics like negotiation and disarmament. To build their capacities to make a transition from violent to political engagement, the process was set up as a peer exchange involving groups who had already succeeded in negotiating a settlement. This was right after 9/11 and the idea of 'talking to terrorists' was highly controversial back then. It also proved to be an extremely contentious issue at board meetings and I am proud to have spoken up in favour of it more than once. Despite the obvious risks involved, I am convinced that in most situations a sustainable settlement can only be achieved by finding ways to constructively engage those who are seen as difficult or hard to reach.

Ultimately, this kind of work and the projects that followed proved to be groundbreaking for Berghof. It also serves as an excellent example that to be successful in the long term, an organisation has to take risks and do things beyond the mainstream. It is important to remind ourselves that success often breeds an aversion to risk. So we should consciously preserve the radical edge that has made us strong in the past.

If we look at the world, we see intensified geopolitical rivalries and eroding multilateralism, widening inequality and polarisation in many societies, and a decline in liberal, democratic values, which create new risks for the work of peacebuilders. What role can organisations like the Berghof Foundation play in this context?

The optimism of liberal peace, which we have seen in the 1990s, has gone and along with that ideas of interventionist power projection have lost their lustre. This in itself might have been a good thing. When paired with humility and an understanding that cookie-cutter solutions do not work, it could provide an opening for the nuanced alternatives we seek to provide.

Unfortunately, at the same time, core liberal values have also lost their appeal as there is a growing view within the general public that democracy fails to deliver. It is tempting to ascribe this to orchestrated disinformation campaigns. As a standalone explanation, however, this smacks of denial. The question itself is key and requires further exploration. I would suspect, though, that the larger transformations our society is going through are an important factor. Clearly, the crumbling of the western liberal political consensus and the international order is creating an opening for totalitarianism.

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To be successful in the long term, an organisation has to take risks and do things beyond the mainstream.

In such a context, there is a need, now more than ever, for spaces for thoughtful reflection, where people in conflict can come together in search for workable alternatives. For us, as much as for those whom we seek to engage, this means keeping an open mind and ascribing new meaning to the things we hold dear, and not confusing the manifestations of our values with the values themselves. Alone, we can achieve nothing: the challenges we face can only be solved through collaboration.

Our field has grown considerably in the past 50 years and today we are accompanied by a number of like-minded organisations that work towards the same goal. Is there still a niche for Berghof and why is the ‘Berghof approach’ to conflict transformation still needed?

There’s a story that when someone in the Berghof Foundation asked my father for his judgement on the work being done, he replied: “I do not think that I can judge it fully, but when I open the newspaper today I can tell that you are not doing enough.” That still applies today. It is great to see that the field has grown, but it is still miniscule, not only in the face of the challenges it seeks to address, but also in terms of the resources it can attract. I have no doubt that our approach, with its strong grounding in principles, does have a place in it. But so do others. When it comes to addressing issues on the ground, though, we should work together in the interest of our beneficiaries. We should also work together to promote the field and develop well-founded arguments that can convince like-minded donors to provide support.

Our anniversary falls at a special and very challenging time. The pandemic has brought suffering and a halt to public life in many countries we are engaged in. It has changed the way we work and communicate, and will also have an enormous economic and financial impact. How do you think it will affect our work in the long run? And how will we navigate in this tightened fiscal space?

This crisis, like any other, creates opportunities as well as risks. We have seen the adoption of information technologies on an unprecedented scale. For us, like many others, it has become clear that while it is important to meet face to face once in a while, it is not always essential to hop on a plane. Online events and training can be a cost-effective and environmentally friendly means of gaining outreach, as compared to in-person meetings.

At the same time, the economic cost of the pandemic has negatively affected our ability to raise and spend funds. Although the challenge of this crisis has generally been met with an expansion of government budgets, funding priorities have shifted away from our field. On top of that, we are facing

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# Part of the success of this organisation has been due to its ability to transform itself and adapt to changing conditions.

the challenge of implementing projects in a time of travel restrictions. Beyond that and maybe more importantly, I do see a cause for concern about the long-term implications of decades of monetary expansion. With inequality, social tensions and the general fragility of the system on the rise, it is hard to see how this situation can be unwound without major disruptions. Financial resilience is therefore high up on our agenda. We are actively seeking to develop new partnerships, both private and public.

Looking ahead, we are entering our sixth decade in a new office, with a newly appointed Executive Director and a new strategy. Where do you see the Berghof Foundation at the end of this decade?

The pandemic aside, the past few years have been eventful for Berghof, as the organisation has expanded rapidly over the past ten years. With a new office located in central Berlin and new leadership in place, now is the time to look ahead and focus on the future.

It seems to me, though, that more than ever in my lifetime, the view is clouded by uncertainty. Over the past years, we in the West had to learn a lesson that may already have been common knowledge elsewhere, which is that nothing can be taken for granted. Navigating these waters requires both humility and a compass of strong values, without jumping to conclusions. These traits I see as some of our strengths. My wish for the next decade is that we will succeed in applying them to make a positive contribution in the numerous transformations that lie ahead and thus stay relevant without losing ourselves.

Transformation will indeed be required if we look at the numerous challenges that lie ahead. Throughout our organisational history, the challenges that were brought about by the historical and political context have always shaped our strategic priorities. We have left old focal areas behind and have explored new ones. Today, we are faced with a number of new crises and macro-historical changes — above all probably the biggest challenge to humanity yet, climate change. How will it affect our work and our strategic priorities?

It is certainly right that part of the success of this organisation has been due to its ability to transform itself and adapt to changing conditions. In hindsight, the main shift has been that from a more activist position to a more diplomatic one, which was related to the shift in geographical focus from Germany to abroad. Beyond that, our understanding of conflict transformation as an open format approach has enabled us to respond pragmatically to contextual requirements. Consequently, we have been able to flexibly integrate different cross-cutting issues into our work, when relevant.

This may be different for climate change and the ongoing digital revolution, two new areas we are looking into and whose impact on the world cannot possibly be understated. I am personally convinced that many of the social and political disruptions we have been witnessing in recent years are at least in part causally related to environmental and technological change. This relationship, however, needs to be better understood before we can draw conclusions. Rather than trying to duplicate what is already being done, we must seek collaboration with others to carve out a complementary understanding of what these developments mean for conflict transformation.



## Our vision

A world changing for the better through constructive conflict transformation.

Even in the midst of destruction, social and political conflict can develop forces of positive change, when people engage with each other constructively and together seek inclusive and peaceful ways to address the grievances and issues that divide them.

## Our mission

To create space for conflict transformation.

We bring people in conflict together. We enable and support learning processes that inspire the development of new perspectives, relationships and behaviour, thus opening possibilities for addressing conflict and finding ways of living together peacefully.

## Principles of our approach

Based on our understanding of each conflict context, we seek to respond adaptively to conflict-specific needs and opportunities as they evolve. At the same time, we remain committed to the following principles, which inform and guide our work.

**Partnership** Conflict transformation is a collaborative and long-term process that requires collaborative efforts by multiple actors. Therefore, we build reliable and transparent partnerships based on mutual trust and respect in order to enhance combined capacities for peaceful change.

**Inclusivity** Inclusivity means participation by those affected. It ensures that all relevant views and interests are addressed. Since it requires a willingness to engage, inclusivity can contribute to the building of trust and foster a culture of constructive engagement.

**Multiple levels** Protracted conflicts are systemic by nature and can sometimes involve societies as a whole. Therefore, we seek to engage people at all levels and build bridges, from grassroots communities and marginalized groups to combatants and political decision-makers.

**Multi-partiality** Integrating opposing perspectives into a peaceful settlement of conflict requires that all sides are equally heard and taken into account. More than being impartial, we approach all parties with openness, trying to understand their underlying interests and motivations

**Ownership** Ownership means enabling those we work with to become involved and assume responsibility for their conflict challenges. Therefore, we see our role as providing the support that empowers others to shape a better future for themselves.

**Reflection** Conflict transformation is a mutual learning process that requires everyone involved to reflect critically on their role, policies and actions. Through systematic reflection and analysis, we seek to improve our practice and share our learning with research communities, policy makers and practitioners.

**Complementarity** We do not work in isolation but rather aim at strengthening and building on existing initiatives. We bring unique strengths to complement ongoing processes. In some settings we support high-level dialogue and mediation processes. In others, we accompany civil society actors and movements.

**Accountability** We assess the conflict sensitivity of our actions and their impact, adjusting our work to minimise unintended harm to those we work with and to the broader conflict context. We report substantively on our work and regularly review our monitoring and evaluation tools.

**Sustained commitment** In conflict transformation there are neither linear blueprints nor quick fixes. Sustained change involves addressing systemic challenges and root causes of conflict. Effective support therefore requires long-term commitment and persistence despite repeated stalemates, backlashes and moments of re-escalation.

## A timeline of the organisation

# 1971

The Berghof Foundation begins its work

The Berghof Foundation for Conflict Studies is founded by Georg Zundel in Munich, (West) Germany as a private limited company with charitable tax-exempt status under German law.

1970s

**Berghof Foundation supports array of peace initiatives**

During its first decade, the Berghof Foundation made grants to support a range of activities and groups focused on peace research and education. This includes seed funding for nascent peace projects and international exchanges. In 1977, the Berghof Foundation begins its support for the Association (later Institute) for Peace Education Tübingen (p. 34).

1980s

**Cold War tensions and growing peace movement deepen Berghof's engagement**

Tensions increase as détente policies are replaced by a new arms race between the Cold War powers, with tactical nuclear weapons deployed either side of the internal German border. The Berghof foundation establishes a research facility in Berlin, the Research Institute of the Berghof Foundation, with an emphasis on analyzing the dynamics of the arms race. As the peace movement grows more vocal, the Berghof Foundation increases its support to peace research, peace education, and non-violent action, while expanding its focus to new strategic areas.

1993

**A new commitment to the resolution of ethno-political conflict**

The Research Institute of the Berghof Foundation becomes the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (later Berghof Conflict Research). It shifts the focus towards the resolution of ethno-political conflict.



A peace rally in the West German capital, Bonn, in 1983.  
Photo: Melde Bildagentur/ullstein bild via Getty Images

1998

**A celebrated resource on conflict transformation emerges**

The groundwork is laid for the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, which publishes its first volume three years later and has since grown into a globally recognized collection of nearly 150 articles on a free online platform and two print volumes (p. 38).

1999

**Reception of a UNESCO prize for peace education**

The Association for Peace Education Tübingen receives a prize for peace education by the UNESCO for its continuous effort to bring the problems of peace and conflict into the forefront of public consciousness.

2001

**Transforming conflict in Sri Lanka**

The Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation begins its sustained programme of local work with the conflict parties in Sri Lanka (p. 70).

2002

**A new home for peace education**

The peace education team of the Berghof Foundation moves to the Georg-Zundel-Haus in Tübingen, which has since then become a place for (international) encounters, expert meetings, trainings and qualification courses (p. 102).

2004

**Providing support for peace processes**

The Berghof Peace Support is established to provide globally oriented support for peace processes (p. 68).

2005

**Peace education goes online**

With the launch of our online portal [Frieden-fragen.de](http://Frieden-fragen.de) we start exploring digital approaches to peace education, which will later also include digital tools to strengthen critical media skills of young people in dealing with online hate speech and conspiracy theories (p. 106).

**Researching Resistance and Liberation movements and former non-state armed groups**

Berghof's project work extends to resistance and liberation movements and former non-state armed groups. The network now spans 20 countries (p. 85).

2007

**Building peace in Colombia**

We start our engagement in Colombia, by equipping peacebuilding actors with a set of methodological tools on conflict-sensitive dialogue, facilitation and planning and later supporting municipal administrations in integrating peacebuilding measures into their development plans and governance procedures (p. 64).

**Promoting joint learning on peacebuilding**

The project 'Peace Counts' begins compiling good-practice examples of global peacebuilding to inspire and promote joint learning in various regions of the world (p. 102).

**Passing of Georg Zundel**

The founder Georg Zundel dies. His family resolves to carry on the Foundation's work.

2008

**Supporting dialogue in Lebanon**

We start our work in Lebanon by providing technical support to the National Dialogue and helping to establish the Common Space Initiative.

2012

**Supporting history dialogues**

We start our work with history dialogues in Georgia and Abkhazia; an approach we have expanded to various other post-conflict settings since (p. 50).

**Unifying conflict research, peace support and peace education**

Three areas that had been operating independently — conflict research, peace support and peace education — are integrated into one new entity: the Berghof Foundation.

**Keeping doors open in Yemen**

We begin our work in Yemen by supporting the preparations for the National Dialogue Conference and have since worked at multiple levels with Yemeni partners to support a political solution to the challenges facing the country (p. 72).

2015

**Mainstreaming peace education in Baden-Wuerttemberg**

Berghof starts the Service Centre Peace Education in Baden-Wuerttemberg together with the State Agency for Civic Education and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports Baden-Wuerttemberg. It is the central point of contact for schools and educators to get advice on their questions related to peace education and to find the opportunity to network with other schools or institutions.

**A local presence in Lebanon**

After seven years of working in Lebanon, we opened a Berghof office in Beirut that today host six of our colleagues.

**Fostering dialogue in Somalia**

With a series of traditional dialogue assemblies (Shirarka) aiming to encourage the sharing of stories and generate ideas for transforming local conflicts, we begin our dialogue support work in Somalia, which we have gradually expanded over the past years (p. 48).







Participants in a workshop on religion and peace education near Berlin, 2018. Photo: Jakob Schnetz / Berghof Foundation





A panel discussion on mediation and dialogue in Islam, in Beirut, 2017.

Photo: Mohamad Moneim / Berghof Foundation

2016

**Supporting Peace  
in Afghanistan**

In close cooperation with the German Federal Foreign Office, the Berghof Foundation begins supporting the Afghan peace process, working with Afghan partners to promote a sustainable resolution to the conflict (p. 76).

2017

**Reception of the  
Peter Becker Prize**

The Berghof Foundation receives the Peter Becker Prize in recognition of its efforts to bring together research and practice for a peaceful transformation of conflicts.

**The National Dialogue  
Handbook — a guide  
for practitioners**

The Berghof Foundation in cooperation with swisspeace launches the National Dialogue Handbook that supports local and international conflict stakeholders and practitioners engaged in National Dialogues (p. 52).

2018

**Strengthening the  
Ethiopian transition  
and reform process**

With a series of high-level dialogue conferences, the Berghof Foundation starts its engagement in support of the Ethiopian transition and reform process (p. 80).

2019

**A new home in Berlin**

The Berlin staff of the Berghof Foundation, having grown to more than 80 staff members, moves to its new headquarters at Lindenstrasse 34 in central Berlin.

2021

50 years of conflict  
transformation

The Berghof Foundation  
celebrates its 50th  
anniversary and adopts  
a new strategic plan that  
expands its activities to six  
new focal areas.

Abkhazia

Croatia

Afghanistan

Egypt

Albania

El Salvador

Algeria

Ethiopia

Armenia

France

Austria

Georgia

Azerbaijan

Germany

Basque Country

Guatemala

Bolivia

Honduras

Bosnia and Herzegovina

India

Burundi

Indonesia (Aceh)

Cameroon

Iran

Chile

Iraq

Colombia

Jordan

Côte d'Ivoire

Kenya

Kosovo



Lebanon

Mali

Mexico

Morocco

Myanmar

Nagorno-

Karabakh

Nepal

Netherlands

Nicaragua

North Macedonia

Paraguay

Philippines

(Mindanao)

Poland

Romania

Russia

Serbia

Somalia

South Ossetia

South Sudan

Sri Lanka

Sudan

Switzerland

Syria

Thailand

Tunisia

Turkey

Ukraine

Yemen

Zimbabwe

A selection of some of the 60+ countries and territories in which we've worked and done research.





1. Venerable Ariya Wun Tha Bhiwun Sa, Abbot of Myawaddy Mingyi Monastery in Mandalay, Myanmar, describing his monastic education approach that promotes openness, sensitivity towards diversity and coexistence.  
Photo: Mir Mubashir / Berghof Foundation
2. Lebanese students take part in a violence prevention workshop.  
Photo: TK / Zeitempiegel
3. Cheryl Saunders from the University of Melbourne at the international roundtable on the nexus of peacemaking and constitution building in New York.  
Photo: Julian Klauke / Berghof Foundation

4. A soldier observes a peace march heading toward Pattani, Thailand.  
Photo: Lukas Coch / Zeitempiegel
5. Marshall Rosenberg, pioneer of nonviolent communication, being interviewed in Munich in 2006. Photo: Paul Hahn / laif
6. A local researcher films a cemetery in Aceh, Indonesia as part of our participatory film project focused on women ex-combatants.  
Photo: Juan Camilo Cruz Orrego / Berghof Foundation





7. Once bitter enemies in Lebanon's civil war, these men worked together to form a violence prevention group called Fighters for Peace. Photo: Frank Schultze / Zeitenspiegel

8. Syrian participants in our resilience workshop at a refugee camp in Jordan, 2019. Photo: Dagmar Nolden / Berghof Foundation

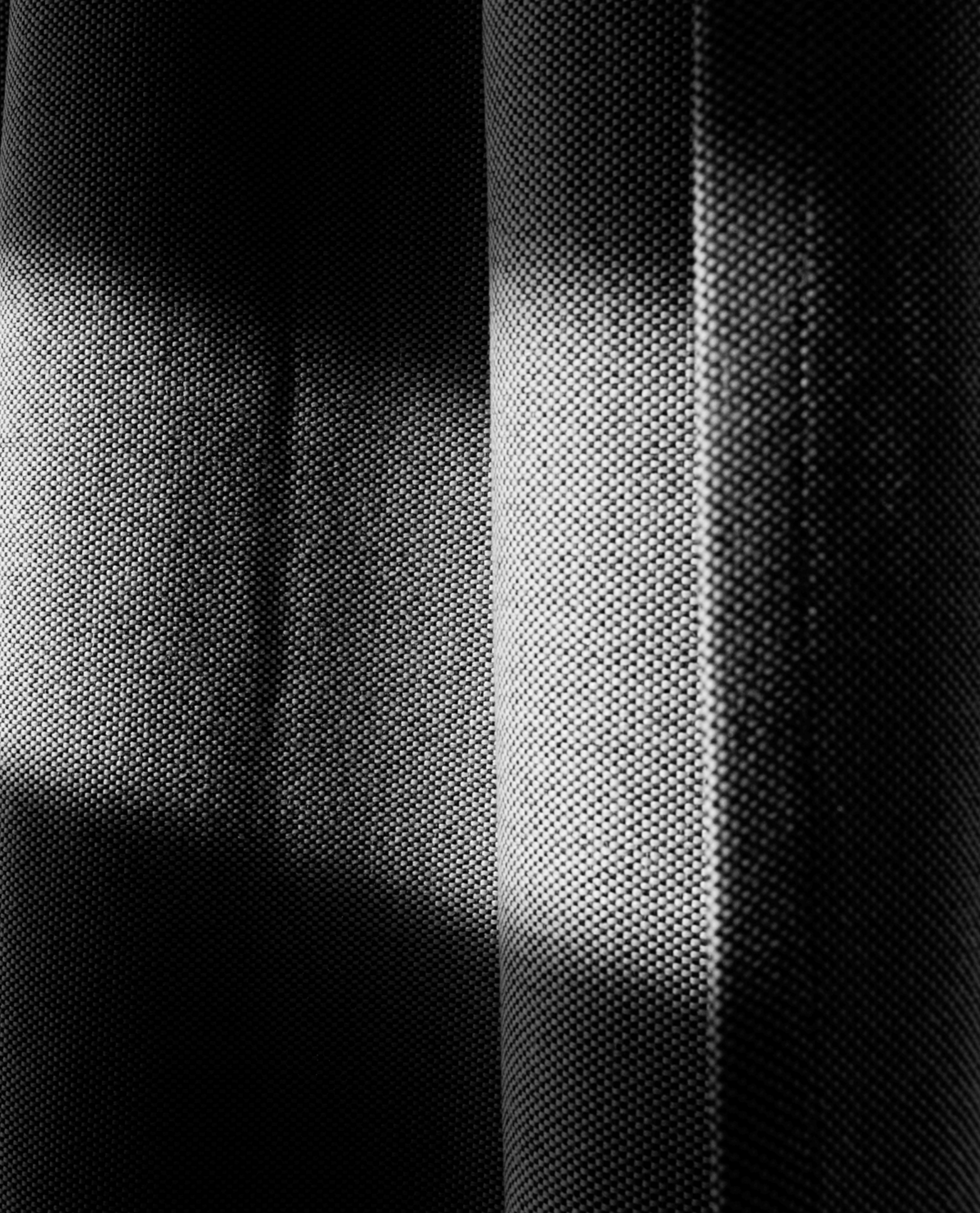
9. Host Faustin Tawite spreads messages of peaceful co-existence on Radio Ushirika in the conflict-riven North Kivu province, Democratic Republic of Congo. Photo: Macline Hien

10. In the decades since the 1994 genocide, community dialogue has helped to promote reconciliation between Hutu and Tutsi neighbours in Rwanda. Photo: Eric Vazzoler / Zeitenspiegel

11. Since 2005, our Frieden-fragen.de website has answered children's questions about war and peace, violence and conflict. Photo: Jan Roeder

12. Kuki militants in northeast India during a ceasefire. Such breaks in conflict can create opportunities to engage in dialogue toward peaceful resolutions. Photo: Anupam Nath





The early years:  
From peace research  
to international  
practice

The Berghof Foundation was founded at a time when the quest for security dominated both the political discourse and the research landscape in Germany. Together with a handful of other institutions, we sought to provide an alternative approach to this one-sided focus, complementing the existing paradigm with more critical research on peace and the establishment of infrastructure for peace education. Over the years, our collaborative and participatory research not only generated knowledge but also contributed to academic debates, guided our practical work, and informed policy-making processes on the national and international stage.

# The Berghof Foundation as a pioneer of civil society and action-oriented conflict and peace research

It is not war that is the real issue, but peace — this was the theme of Gustav Heinemann's inaugural speech as Federal President in 1969, which marked the start of state-funded peace and conflict research in Germany. Just one year later, the German Society for Peace and Conflict Research was founded, followed by institutions that are still prominent today, such as the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt (Hessische Stiftung Friedens- und Konfliktforschung — HSFK) and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg.

The Cold War, security threats from conventional arms races and the dangers of war posed by the nuclear deterrent system were salient reasons for this development. Against this background, and with momentum created by the student movement in the 1960s and the change of government to a social-liberal coalition in Germany, there was a willingness to formulate and shape a new peace policy at the end of the 1960s that was unique in Germany's post-war history.

It was in this spirit of optimism that Professor Georg Zundel took the decision to establish the private Berghof Foundation for Conflict Research in 1971. It focused on several key aspects: (1) (interdisciplinary) cooperation between the social and natural sciences; (2) the analysis of

complex structural and direct relations of violence, including with countries of the Global South; (3) the exploration of civil, non-violent alternatives to the prevailing military-supported security policy and the individual and societal preconditions for successful peacebuilding; and (4) the communication and application of research results to support peace education and peace policy practice.

In its first decade, the Berghof Foundation funded not only larger projects but also several journals and more than 20 organisations located at the intersections of peace research, peace education and the peace movement. These were often smaller grants for projects that would otherwise have had little chance of receiving financial support under the emerging state and academic funding system. Funding was provided for working groups, conferences and international exchange, as well as for the development of a peace education infrastructure in Germany. The Institute for Peace Education founded in Tübingen in 1976 — formerly the Association for Peace Education — was among the organisations that received funding during the 1970s.

Based on experience of the first decade, the Berghof Foundation's Board decided in 1985 to define various strategic priorities and promote research projects and activities that focused on peacebuilding

and peace education, social movements and non-violent action, global political trends and conflict dynamics in the Global South, and armament dynamics and their implications for peacebuilding policy and structures in Europe.

In setting these priorities, the Berghof Foundation enriched the research landscape and enabled civil society actors — through infrastructural aid and participatory action research — to support the peace movement in Germany, which had gained strength in the 1980s. The need for this was obvious. On the one hand, the general public had to be made aware of the peace-threatening dimensions of the prevailing security policy, and on the other hand, it was a matter of supporting an emerging societal learning process on issues of peace policy. The decision to station new (tactical) nuclear weapons in Germany in December 1979 raised many questions for which answers had to be found. At the same time, there was a growing interest in appropriate forms of action within the new peace movement. Many of the research papers and learning materials whose development and publication were facilitated by the Berghof Foundation and which focus on non-violent resistance and non-violence as a principle of life and action have been agreed, discussed and enhanced at conferences and during courses and workshops.

Frequently, the direct experiences of participants in non-violent action have been incorporated into this process.

In the process of clarifying the relationship with the peace movement, a principle has emerged that is still valid for the Berghof Foundation's approach today: making people aware of the correlation and simultaneous difference between attitudes and personal commitment, on the one hand, and professional peacebuilding as enabling, counselling and supporting, on the other. Building on these experiences, institutions such as the Research Institute of the Berghof Foundation (1989), the Berghof Research Center for Constructive Conflict Management (1993, later Berghof Conflict Research), the Institute for Peace Education (1999) and Berghof Peace Support (2004) were each able to set new accents in theory and practice and unite them in 2012 within the framework of the Berghof Foundation, which — 50 years after its founding — continues to explore the academic bases for the promotion of peacebuilding capacity and conflict transformation, both in Germany and around the world.

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Climate  
change  
will  
become  
the new  
focus of  
peace  
research

Honorary Chair  
Board of Trustees  
Berghof  
Foundation

The Berghof Foundation was founded in a spirit of optimism, as the article on the previous page shows. Why was the establishment of government-funded peace and conflict research so important at that time?

In retrospect, I suppose we might describe it as initial euphoria. But the background to the various initiatives promoting peace research was very different: the East-West conflict, which came to a head in the 1950s and 1960s. The ideological conflict with all its consequences divided the world, especially Europe and Germany. The danger of nuclear war was particularly acute in Europe. This was the backdrop to governmental and non-governmental initiatives to promote peace research, especially in former West Germany.



Looking back at the last 50 years, what have we achieved in peace and conflict research since then and what has the Berghof Foundation contributed?

Government funding of peace and conflict research began in the early 1970s. The establishment of two government-funded institutions — the Peace Research Institute Frankfurt and the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg — and the gradual integration of peace research into various disciplines at universities were of particular importance. This welcome development led to a thematic expansion of peace research over time.

In addition to armament dynamics, the focus of the research moved to issues such as aggression and violence, including the central question of how peace can be achieved and successfully shaped within society at a local level and in the regional and international context. The founding of the Berghof Foundation also had an important impact on this development. As a private organisation, it was able to promote initiatives to broaden the thematic scope of research.

At that time, the organisation focused particularly on promoting peace education projects in universities, schools and peace movements. One milestone reached as a result of this support was the Institute for Peace Education in Tübingen, which is still active both regionally and beyond.

You are one of the few people to have been involved with the Berghof Foundation from the start. What is your experience of the organisation today and how does it differ from back then?

In the first decades of its existence, the Berghof Foundation handed out grants for projects which were generally carried out by external partners. These efforts contributed significantly to the development of research and practical peace activities in Germany. Today, the Berghof Foundation focuses primarily on its own international activities, mainly in cooperation with experts and potential funders beyond its own borders.

Looking to the future, the world is once again facing major challenges. How should they be addressed by peace and conflict research? And what kind of role do you envisage for organisations such as the Berghof Foundation?

While the analysis of armament dynamics at the international and national level was once one of the main challenges that led to the emergence of peace research, it is foreseeable that the obviously dramatic increase in climate change — albeit with different levels of intensity in different parts of the world — will become the new focus of peace research. Here, the Berghof Foundation must succeed in what it failed to do in the first decades of its activities, namely to build on the expertise of the natural sciences. This had always been the aim of Professor Georg Zundel, the founder of the Berghof Foundation, since the early 1970s. However, social science contributions to solving scientific problems were still relatively unknown in the natural sciences at the time, which is why, with very few exceptions, no bridges were built between the two disciplines. Successful efforts in this direction, entirely in the spirit of the organisation's founder, are long overdue and the conditions are more favourable today. I very much hope that these efforts will be successful. That is also my wish for the Berghof Foundation on the occasion of its 50th anniversary.



[It] will be looked  
back upon thirty  
years from now as a  
foundational account  
of the field. I plan to  
keep it close at hand.

John Paul Lederach

As the Berghof Foundation turns 50, its publication of longest standing looks back at its own anniversary: 2021 marks 20 years since the first articles were published in the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation. The web-based knowledge platform has grown, over the years, into a globally recognised and widely acclaimed one-stop shop for innovative knowledge and critical/constructive debate on how to turn conflict transformation from theory into practice.

Today, the continually expanding free online platform hosts nearly 150 articles (56 of which are in English, the remaining being translations into Arabic, German, Tamil, Russian, Sinhala, Spanish and Turkish). Key works are captured in two edited volumes (Transforming Ethnopolitical Conflict and Advancing Conflict Transformation, Berghof Handbook I and II). In addition, there is the Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series with 13 issues so far — exchanges between scholars and practitioners from different disciplines and world regions on some of the thorniest issues and dilemmas in conflict transformation and peacebuilding. They range from

Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (Issue no. 1) to, most recently, Transforming Violent Extremism (Issue no. 13).

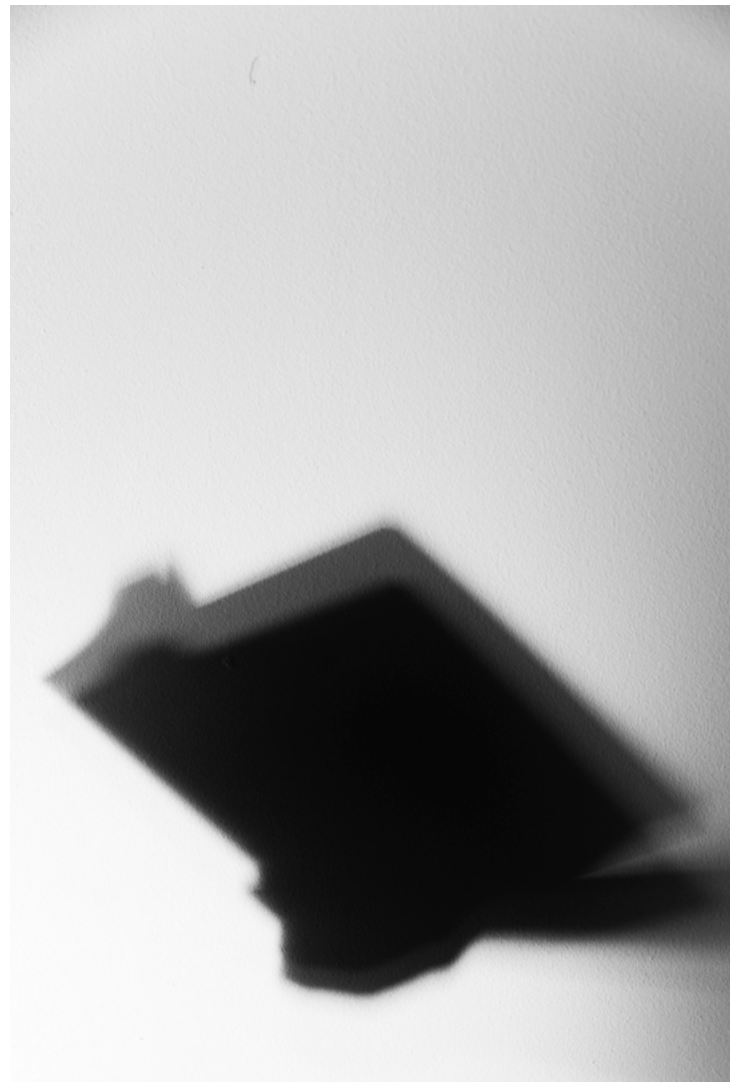
At its inception, the Handbook benefited from generous funding from the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research in the late 1990s. In later years, indeed decades, the continuation of the Handbook has been one of the investments made by the Berghof Foundation from its core funds in response to unbroken demand. Its guiding idea remains to present the evolving state of the art in conflict transformation and peacebuilding in one place — accessible and informative for scholars, students, practitioners and policy-makers in search of conceptual frameworks, impact stories and lessons learned from the field.

The impact of this flagship publication, both in terms of providing a valuable service to peacebuilders around the world and in putting the Berghof Foundation and its predecessor institutes firmly on the map of international conflict transformation, is evident both anecdotally and in

numbers. Download numbers remain high, averaging well over 150,000 per year, and not counting the numerous sister sites where Berghof Handbook articles are available. “Berghof publications continue to journey with me wherever I go,” writes one of our previous authors a good 10 years after first publishing with us. Indeed, we have happened to come across the blue books on shelves and in training courses as far afield as South Sudan, Afghanistan and India. Handbook articles appear on course syllabi and reading lists at many universities and across numerous disciplines. Indeed, one Peace Studies course in Germany was entirely constructed around the Berghof Handbook Dialogue Series, with students’ assignments being to produce additional commentaries on the content of the series.

Reviews throughout the years attest that the Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation “truly manages to fill a gap connecting theory with practice” and “systematically charts and consolidates our knowledge.” It has been called “very productive” and “skilfully crafted.” In his foreword to the second print edition, the doyen of conflict transformation John Paul Lederach wrote that it “has integrated three decades of practice and theory and will be looked back upon thirty years from now as a foundational account of the field. I plan to keep it close at hand.”

With such encouragement from scholars and practitioners alike, we embark into our sixth decade with unwavering commitment. New or ever more pressing strategic “nexus” topics present themselves for exploration: How will conflict transformation adapt to climate change conditions? What distinguishes transformative approaches to supporting good governance and tackling corruption? How can inclusive historical narratives be forged amidst contestation and polarisation? How will the Western proponents of peacebuilding manage to ‘bring peacebuilding home’ to their own communities? What rights-based system(s) of order will emerge from what, in 2021, looks like the ashes of many old certainties and an emerging multi-polar world disorder, and how will conflict transformation work in this new context?



# Supporting peace from below in the aftermath of the Cold War

1990s ●

The end of the Cold War, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the breakdown of former Yugoslavia, the more or less radical regime changes in Eastern Europe and the reunification of Germany characterised the political landscape of the early 1990s. During this period, 22 new states were (re-)established, many of which immediately experienced violent political conflicts. A key driver of these conflicts was tension between ethno-national minorities who had managed to co-exist in the Soviet Union, Yugoslavia and in the communist states of Eastern Europe. Yet, in the newly emerging nation-states, the majority community insisted on retaining a dominant position. These conflicts particularly affected Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo and several regions of the Soviet Union, as well as Eastern European states with significant minority communities.

As new regional or national majorities or minorities were created in the borders of these 'new' states, the institutions of the old communist states — socialist parties, trade unions and various strategic elites — ceased to be the dominant decision-makers. Emerging political leaders like Slobodan Milosevic often referenced the grandiose or painful past in

order to justify their communities' and their personal leadership claims.

Like many other observers, the Berghof Foundation was tempted to find entry points for conflict transformation in the quickly evolving federal landscapes of the Western Balkans and the former Soviet Union. After closer investigation, we realised that — due to our background with issues of minority protection in multi-ethnic contexts — our team at the time was best equipped to deal with a more latent conflict occurring in Romania after the revolution of December 1989 between the Romanian majority community and the Hungarian minority in Transylvania, a region which had belonged to Hungary prior to World War I. Developments in the city of Targu Mures in March 1990, seen as a potential trigger for something similar to what happened in Yugoslavia, motivated us to study the situation in detail and consult with partners from and in Romania.

Over the next few months, we developed a training concept for a group of junior politicians, representatives of youth organisations and religious leaders with a high potential of reaching other



interested and influential groups. Participants learned about analysing and transforming political conflicts and how to engage with each other effectively across different identity groups. Based on experiences in other projects, we were aware of the need to create long-lasting interpersonal exchanges, which is why we organised several week-long seminars spread out over three years in different countries and environments.

Several of the participants — particularly those with an academic, political, educational or religious background — made use of the tools from our events in various ways, with one group generating their own training course and some of the participating politicians and academics making use of Berghof's guest scholarship programme to develop their own ideas and proposals for a settlement of the Romanian-Hungarian conflict. An official press event to present the issues and results of the project was organised in May 1995 in the Council of Europe's Romanian Office in Bucharest. One year later, in September 1996, Romania and Hungary signed a Treaty of Understanding, Cooperation and Good Neighbourliness.

The lessons from the Transylvania project encouraged Berghof to expand its outreach to other regions in Central and Eastern Europe. Workshops in Moscow (1995) and Warsaw (1996) saw a group of 50 peace and minority rights activists grappling with how to manage, settle and transform conflicts in line with the concepts of 'good governance' and 'participatory democracy'. Only 16 of the participants were affiliated with formal NGOs — the vast majority belonged to informal networks, some working as solo activists in their respective countries and regions. They examined cases covering a broad spectrum within what is currently called 'illiberal peacemaking,' such as the Chechen-Russian conflict, the consensual dissolution of Czechoslovakia and the settlement of several conflicts between various republics and the Russian federal government.

These workshops focused on multi-ethnic community- and bridge-building, but also covered advocacy for non-violence and minority rights, mediation, and empowerment. The experience and lessons learned during these explorations would influence our work in many other contexts over the subsequent decades.



## Providing space for innovation

To complement its own operational activities and to explore new and innovative ideas, the Berghof Foundation has for the majority of its existence also acted as a grant-making institution that funded state-of-the-art conflict transformation projects of other organisations and individuals. The grant-making programme — which was later complemented by a two-year Georg Zundel scholarship programme named in honour of the organisation's founder — allowed us to question our own assumptions and tackle issues that we believed were of relevance to the peacebuilding field.

After building numerous valuable partnerships and providing a total of €35 million in funding for more than 450 projects, both programmes were cancelled in 2015 to allow a stronger focus on our operational work.

For this book, we talked with one of our grantees, Ram Bhandari. He received two research grants for his work on transitional justice (2011-12) and for a project with former child soldiers (2014-16) in his native country Nepal. In the following interview, Ram provides insights into how the grants made a difference to his life and work.

## The Berghof Foundation as grant-maker

You were an active peacebuilder long before you worked with the Berghof Foundation. What was your path into the field of peacebuilding?

**I come from a family directly victimized by forced disappearances. I have suffered imprisonment, threats and physical abuse as a result of my activism against the authorities responsible for the disappearance of my father during the armed conflict. During my time as a student and later as an activist I went through many legal battles trying to find out what happened to him. In 2005, and with no news about the fate of my father, I met other families in a similar situation during my battles in courts and in the streets during public protests. I was convinced that we could achieve more if we all worked together. I started in my home town Lamjung, where I built a small network of families and established a community radio station. Radio was a powerful tool to convey our message into rural villages as most people were illiterate. Back in Kathmandu in 2009, I then formed a national network of families of the disappeared (NEFAD) to advance a victim-led transitional justice advocacy.**

#### How did you get in touch with the Berghof Foundation?

Because I was pushing for change, justice and accountability, I received many threats from the security forces. In 2010, I decided to leave Nepal and study abroad, first in Italy and then at the University of Hamburg, where I met the former Executive Director of the Berghof Foundation, Professor Hans J. Giessmann, who supervised my thesis. It was through this study programme that I got to know the Berghof Foundation and its approach to conflict transformation through action research. After my return to Nepal, I successfully applied for two research grants.

#### What were you able to achieve with the grants?

The first grant in 2011 allowed me to expand the work I did prior to leaving Nepal. We worked with associations that represented the families of the disappeared. We supported their mobilisation efforts by providing them with training in leadership skills and with the necessary equipment to conduct research themselves, which allowed us to conduct around 300 interviews and produce a written report in English and Nepali. A large-scale launch event in Kathmandu and other dissemination activities helped connect the local activists with high-level policy makers such as the Minister for Peace and

Reconstruction, parliamentarians, political leaders, civil society actors, donors, and embassies. This generated a real space for dialogue and partnership. The network is still active today and enabled the emergence of local leaders who are still engaged in their community.

We are now planning to form an international network led by victims and survivors. We are well-connected with grassroots movements around the world who want to represent and claim their rights themselves. In January 2020, we organised a big meeting in The Hague to set up the International Network of Victims and Survivors of Serious Human Rights Abuses (INOVAS), which we aim to launch with partners in more than ten countries. I have high hopes that being part of international advocacy will benefit our local Nepalese members as well.

#### How did the grants influence your own work and life trajectory?

The grants supported me on my path to become the grassroots peacebuilder and advocate for justice that I am today both locally and internationally. They have allowed me to use my nonviolent local activism to shape a policy dialogue on the national level and to change the system of transitional justice in Nepal.





Creating  
space  
for  
dialogue:  
From  
the  
local  
to the  
national  
level

Dialogues are a key concept in conflict transformation and have been at the centre of our work for decades. They can transform relationships, promote empathy, or pave the way for more formal peace negotiations. We have supported dialogue efforts between a wide variety of stakeholders on all levels, from the very local level in Somalia to an all-encompassing National Dialogue in Yemen.

# Building peace in Somalia, one Shir at a time

2015–present ●

Somalia is characterised by various types of conflict that include clan rivalry and religious extremism. The lack of economic opportunities, poor governance and lingering insecurity in the country frustrate Somalis' attempts to build a more peaceful society. Conflicts in Somalia often begin with disagreements between individuals and later escalate to clan-based violence. Much of the violence relates to disputes between communities around land and resources, and these conflicts have various historical roots and causes, many of which have never been addressed. The civilian population bears the brunt of the conflicts. This is also the case in the central states of Hirshabelle and Galmudug, where the Berghof Foundation has been active since 2015.

In such a context, a proactive approach of dialogue and mediation is indispensable to prevent violent conflict, and most importantly to improve the conditions that help sustain peaceful sociopolitical relations and coexistence. To achieve this, the Berghof Foundation has been using inclusive community dialogue assemblies, or Shirarka. Each large-scale Shir allows members of the public the space and opportunity to discuss their concerns about various topics. The event takes place over a period of six days and involves 50 participants from all relevant segments of society,

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The community has gained a lot because everyone's opinions were considered in the discussions and it has produced applicable results, which help in resolving conflicts in Balad.

Ugaas Mohamed Weli Islow Hussein  
Traditional elder and co-facilitator  
of the Balad dialogue assembly

including elders, religious leaders, members of the business community, journalists, women and youth representatives, artists and poets.

The aim of the Shirarka is to create an open and inclusive platform where the people can feel free to discuss pertinent issues in their communities and society. The platforms give them a chance to come up with ideas to transform local conflicts, and through mechanisms that we have created within the project, these ideas and perspectives are then channelled to decision-makers at the state and national levels. Over the years, this format has proven to be a well-

received tool for fostering local ownership and articulating local views on conflict and peace. The participants have the opportunity to learn about others' perspectives, which builds empathy and strengthens social cohesion.

Topics addressed at the Shirarka over the years include approaches to conflict resolution and transformation, mediation initiatives, in-depth conflict analysis, federalism and the federalisation process in Somalia, reconciliation support, and preventing revenge killings. In upcoming Shirarka, we will address the impact that climate change has on (community) conflict. These discussions should increase recognition of the climate crisis and its impact on conflict and peace in Somalia, while supporting the development of ideas for how to address and reduce the impact of climate change.

The people who take part in the Shirarka are active and engaged individuals in their communities and they are encouraged to guide discussions on these thematic matters when they return home. They act as multipliers in their communities, and the topics of the Shirarka thus reach a wide range of people in Hirshabelle and Galmudug, both geographically and with regard to different social groups.

The events are carried out in close cooperation with the authorities from Hirshabelle and Galmudug States and their district-level authorities. This cooperation with the authorities builds the visibility and credibility of the government within a federal system. The diverse perspectives on conflict that are voiced at each of the assemblies are then linked to policy- and decision-makers at the government level. These assemblies thus contribute greatly to the mutually reinforcing processes of reconciliation and statebuilding while increasing social cohesion. Moreover, through these events, the concepts of mediation and reconciliation have become more mainstreamed in Somali society and have been received with great interest on the part of the community and government. Reconciliation among the communities and clans in Somalia is seen as an essential element for successfully building a prosperous and peaceful federal state.



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When I go back, I will share with them what I've learned from the debates: the root causes of conflicts and how to resolve them. All of this has very much influenced my life and that of the people around me.

Ishmael Geedi Hassan  
Shirarka participant and member  
of a Somali youth organisation

# A cautious rapprochement

## History dialogue as the basis for normalisation in Georgia and Abkhazia\*

2012–present ●

Lana Chkadua has three folders on her computer. Each holds interviews with people who can remember the war between Abkhazia and Georgia from 1992 to 1993. They fall into three distinct categories. “I can’t begin with the killings. That’s too much for people,” the young woman says. “So I choose memories of how the teacher suddenly turned dismissive or how mistrust grew among neighbours.” The aim is to familiarise the 10-12 Abkhaz workshop participants with the method before delving in further. “You need to be able to listen to what the people say in the interviews. You have to ask: ‘Why do they tell their story the way they do?’”

This is followed by reflections on the war’s brutalities. Take, for instance, the story of an Abkhazian woman, whose son lost a leg in the war and was flown out to a hospital in Russia with a Russian helicopter. While accompanying him, she realised that one of the injured men on board, in a fever, was calling for his mother in Georgian. She urged him to keep quiet, or else the Abkhazian men would throw him out of the helicopter. At the hospital, she saw to his treatment and wrote to his family in Georgia.

Emotions always run high when they talk about this story in her workshops, says Lana Chkadua, who has been running the events in Abkhazia for two years. Her Georgian partner Nugzar Kokhreidze does the same in his country. “As a moderator, I ask the participants what they would do. Should there only be Abkhazians in the helicopter?”

The conflict between Abkhazia and Georgia has been frozen since 1993. There is no peace. How quickly such an unstable situation can re-escalate became evident recently in the heavy fighting in the

neighbouring countries of Armenia and Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Abkhazia can be described as a de facto state which even after 30 years is not recognised internationally and, despite many years of international mediation, continues to be the object of maximalist demands by both parties to the conflict.

The Berghof Foundation has been organising workshops together with our local partners in Georgia and Abkhazia since 2012. The workshops are strictly divided into an Abkhazian and a Georgian part. The positive outcomes of the workshops then trickle down into society. In the beginning, it was difficult to convince people to talk about their memories of the war, programme manager Oliver Wolleh recalls. “For instance, someone said: ‘I’m just an old woman. You should ask a general instead.’ But gradually people began to realise that we were genuinely interested in their experiences.” In the meantime, more than 400 interviews have been conducted with Georgians and Abkhazians. They are the basis for discussions in the workshops, but are also an audio archive for both sides. The memory of the war is suppressed both in Georgia and in Abkhazia. In order not to have to deal with history, dubious narratives are created, which destabilise the present and block a new beginning in the future. “As the rift is so deep, it’s a major challenge to take the other side into consideration. Wartime memories, but also their instrumentalisation, play a major role at a time when a new generation has been growing up on both sides,” says Cindy Wittke from the Leibniz Institute for East and Southeast European Studies.

In fact, most of the workshop participants in Abkhazia and Georgia have not consciously

witnessed the war. Many are young and have learned about the workshops at school and university.

“The narrative in Georgian society goes like this: The Abkhazians are our brothers and sisters, Russia is our enemy,” Nugzar Kokhreidze explains. “With my workshops, I want Georgian society to be aware of the other side, including their demand for independence. That’s the only way to build trust.” In Abkhazia, on the other hand, no one wanted to be reminded of what had been done to the Georgian neighbours. The crimes against the civilian population and the expulsions were simply ignored, Lana Chkadua says. “Rather, the message is:

hot again, as the war in Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia in 2008 showed,” says Cindy Wittke.

Such forms of dialogue can reduce the participants’ negative attitudes towards the other party to the conflict. New technology can help participants stay in touch after the workshops.

This year, the dialogue between Abkhazians and Georgians will leave the protective setting of the workshops and continue on a larger scale. There will be a format on Georgian television based on the workshop method: Two Georgians and two Abkhazians plus a presenter will talk about what they saw and heard at the beginning of the programme.



Dialogue in the form of a ‘biographical salon’ in Sukhum/i, Abkhazia. Photo: Oliver Wolleh / Berghof Foundation

All Georgians were aggressors, we had to defend ourselves. They lost and now they are gone.”

What makes the conflict between the Abkhazians and the Georgians so dangerous is the absence of dialogue, both at the official level and between people. Therefore, after three or four eyewitness accounts, the other side has its say in Lana Chkadua and Nugzar Kokhreidze’s workshops. Almost 2200 workshops have taken place in Georgia and Abkhazia between 2015 and 2020; after the outbreak of the pandemic via video conference. “The meetings are important, because the more informal contacts there are, the better. The absence of dialogue is dangerous in frozen conflicts that can quickly become

For this purpose, we animate some of the interviews. In one of the films, an Abkhaz participant describes how he witnessed Georgian soldiers forcing an older man to fetch water from a well, something that is inconceivable in the culture of the Caucasus. But then the Abkhazian says: “The past is over. The Georgians are no longer my enemies.” Such a phrase contradicts what most of the Abkhazians still think. Lana Chkadua keeps it for the final stage of her workshops. She hopes that by then, her participants will be ready for the start of something new.

\*An extended version of this text was published by journalist Tobias Asmuth in German in the Leibniz Magazin on 21 January 2021.

## A model for inclusive political negotiations and multi-party talks?

Peace talks are becoming more complex. While they have traditionally focused on ceasefires and frameworks for political reform, current negotiation processes include many more topics, ranging from power-sharing mechanisms, reform of governance systems, constitution-making, transitional justice and economic aspects to restructuring the security sector.

Peace talks are also becoming more inclusive. Talks between a government on the one side and a rebel or insurgency movement on the other are more the exception than the rule. Local and traditional actors, civil society, victims and women groups all want to have a stake in the process and representation at the table, or at least want to be heard and consulted on specific topics. Inclusivity is increasingly becoming a normative pattern. It offers many benefits as it positively affects the acceptance and sustainability of agreements.

Developments towards more complex and inclusive negotiation processes started 30 years

ago, when a number of countries in Eastern Europe set up roundtables with hundreds of participants to negotiate and manage the transition from communist rule to more democratic political systems. In the early 1990s, a series of national conferences also took place in Africa, starting in the Francophone countries and later extending to the multi-party peace negotiations in South Africa in 1992-99.

These National Dialogues — or similar processes under different names — gained in popularity during the Arab Spring, when there were calls for National Dialogues in nearly every country of the Middle East and North Africa. In 2015, the Tunisian Quartet received the Nobel Peace Prize in appreciation of their work.

However, planning and facilitating complex, inclusive negotiation or dialogue processes is a major challenge. What can be done to ensure that the process has sufficient legitimacy while still being effective enough to produce the desired outcomes?





An expert panel at the Roundtable on Emerging National Dialogues in Berlin, 2015. Photo: Berghof Foundation

A successful National Dialogue needs careful preparation and a considerable amount of creativity. It cannot replace or create the necessary political will, nor is it a substitute for the courageous leadership by key parties that is required for a successful process.

In order to help parties in conflict to address this set of challenges, the Berghof Foundation has provided strategic and process advice for over 20 years. We began in Sri Lanka in 2001, when we initiated and facilitated the Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation, which offered space for dialogue to all conflict parties (including the Muslim minority) on all major topics of the peace process; later in Lebanon, we partnered with UNDP to support the National Dialogue process that had begun in 2008. From 2012-2014, we supported the preparation and implementation of the National Dialogue Conference in Yemen. A number of additional National Dialogue support activities in Sudan, Mali, Afghanistan and Ethiopia followed.

Since 2008, we have been providing strategic coaching to conflict stakeholders on inclusive national dialogue formats, as well as to international actors such as the EU, UN, the OSCE and a number of Ministries of Foreign Affairs. Since 2015, we have been running an annual one-week training course on National Dialogue and Peace Mediation in partnership with Swisspeace.

The flagship of our support, however, is the National Dialogue Handbook: A Guide for Practitioners, which was finalised in 2017 after intensive consultations and case study analysis involving academics, practitioners and representatives of the UN and the World Bank. The Handbook offers a comprehensive, state-of-the-art overview of key elements of National Dialogues and includes 19 country case studies. It has become an important reference document in many National Dialogue processes and has been translated from English into Arabic, French and Spanish.



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The efforts of the Berghof Foundation to establish informal dialogue on various issues ... between the key political actors were precious and brave.

Zoran Zaev  
Prime Minister  
North Macedonia

# Breaking political deadlocks and building trust with informal high-level dialogues

## North Macedonia

When the project idea for an informal high-level dialogue process in Macedonia was conceived, the country was in the midst of a severe political crisis that had escalated after the opposition did not recognise the results of the April 2014 general elections. The crisis escalated further with the release of a series of wiretapped conversations in early 2015, which alleged widespread corruption and abuse of power by high-ranking government and VMRO-DPMNE party officials. This confrontation between government and opposition was accompanied by a large-scale mobilisation of initially mostly anti-government protesters, culminating in the ‘colourful revolution’ movement in 2016. Due to diplomatic pressure by the European Union and the United States, the key political parties in Macedonia agreed to a European Union mediated high-level (‘track 1’) process referred to as the Pržino talks (2015).

The informal dialogue process facilitated by the Berghof Foundation directly supported the track 1 agreement and its implementation by providing substantive and process-related options, proposals and policy briefs and empowering a critical mass of influential political changemakers from the key political parties who could potentially serve as bridge-builders, reframers and initiators of compromise. The importance of this ‘track 1.5’ process was further underlined after the official high-level ‘track 1’ process ended in July 2016 with the political tensions continuing to escalate, culminating in the storming of Parliament on 27 April 2017 by supporters of VMRO-DPMNE who attacked Zoran Zaev, the leader of the

Social Democratic Union of Macedonia; Zijadin Sela, the leader of the Alliance for Albanians; and several other MPs.

Amid this heightened tension, our *Imagining New Pathways for a Prosperous Macedonia* dialogue series managed to offer space for dialogue, encounter and cooperation among key political party representatives. In facilitated discussions, workshop participants were able to test ideas, forge relations, engage in joint analysis and reflection on the situation, and find mutually agreeable solutions to break the political impasse in the country. Participants included deputy prime ministers, government ministers, party vice-presidents, senior advisors and spokespersons, and other influential political changemakers from the key political parties who were all well-placed within their respective structures and vis-à-vis each other to potentially serve as bridge-builders and initiators of compromise. Additionally, the dialogue series engaged a core group of civil society members who carried a level of social standing and influence as opinion-makers and therefore were able to push for compromise.

The opportunity to engage with political opponents in a setting away from the public eye allowed the participants to develop personal connections and engage differently than in the context of election campaigns or public disagreements, as one high-level party representative who had attended several workshops stated. These direct connections removed the possibility for personal attacks, and disagreements were dealt with at the policy level. Participants further underlined the particularly positive effect on younger participants, who used the opportunity to develop a political culture significantly different from that of their more senior colleagues due to their engagement in these workshops and dialogues. Finally, the dialogue workshops allowed for the development of an informal network of influential personalities and established channels of communication for future collaboration and lasting partnerships, which ultimately contributed to a strengthening of the reform process in Macedonia. These channels also proved useful during separate efforts to resolve the long-running dispute over the country’s name that had hampered its engagement in international fora.



Conflict has left its mark on Lebanon's capital, Beirut.  
Photo: Peace Counts

Lebanon has a wealth of experience in religious, political and inter-group dialogue. Yet the Sunni-Shia sectarian divide keeps resurfacing during major national crises such as those which the country has been witnessing recently. Hate speech, misinformation and sectarian polarisation have been spreading on the various social media platforms that people use to find news and information, express their opinions, engage in public debate or mobilise for their causes.

With the support of the Swiss Federal Foreign Office and the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Berghof Foundation has been supporting the establishment of safety nets against Sunni-Shia polarisation in Lebanon since 2017. This work enabled the formation of a group of 16 young Sunni and Shia media influencers. These well-known and charismatic individuals formed a diverse group, with contrasting political views and, in some cases, existing animosities towards each other at the outset of the project. Based on a shared concern about sectarian incitement and hate speech on social media, the group came together in regular dialogue meetings and capacity- and team-building activities. Together, they developed content addressing stereotypes in order to ease sectarian polarisation and emphasise shared values of inclusive citizenship. Through this process, the group managed to overcome their initial animosities towards each other and found a balanced way of presenting different opinions or agreeing on compromise solutions, which was a major success. A testimony given by one of the group members speaks for itself: "I used to be very mean and aggressive online [...] My involvement in the project was like therapy to me: it made me deal

with my bottled-up anger and hence totally changed my behaviour and attitude.”

The group not only produced social media content and conducted outreach activities to raise awareness of the critical importance of social media as a tool for escalation and de-escalation. Its members also engaged in practical de-escalation activities at a time of political tension and an increasingly fragile security situation. Two of these engagements are particularly noteworthy.

On 29 October 2019, hundreds of pro-government demonstrators attacked a protest camp in central Beirut’s Martyrs’ Square, set up by anti-government demonstrators who were calling on the government to step down. The attackers tore down tents, beat up some of the anti-government protesters and chased them away. The following night, one of the attackers appeared on a popular talk show on Lebanese TV. Although apologetic, he justified his group’s actions as consequences of incitement and political agitation. He was roundly criticised on social media, with calls for revenge targeting him and the community on whose behalf he was assumed to be speaking. However, several members of the social media influencers’ group quickly tried to diffuse the situation by calling on their followers to show empathy, renounce violence, and prioritise forgiveness and patriotism over emotional reactions, reflexive anger and scapegoating. Using the same screenshot of the TV interview with the attacker to demonstrate their coordinated position, they argued for de-escalation and led the communities they influence towards non-violent expressions of feelings and opinions, which was reflected in the follow-up comments and posts.

This was indeed a safety net that operated in real time, underlining the impact and necessity of this work by preventing an already ugly episode from escalating further.

June 2020 saw another example of the group’s attempts to calm the situation. Beirut’s streets had been mostly quiet for many weeks due to the Covid-19 lockdown. As the country was easing its restrictions on public gatherings, many protest groups issued calls for a demonstration in downtown Beirut on 6 June 2020. The call to demonstrate turned incendiary when some groups included the demand to disarm Hezbollah, a very contentious topic in Lebanese politics. The gathering became very polarised, and clashes between demonstrators and different groups broke out in the streets, with security forces getting involved. Things escalated to such an extent that the day was soon dubbed ‘Black Saturday’. Within hours, the members of the social media group were taking action. They sent out de-escalatory messages and appealed for calm, called for an end to sectarian insults and accusations, and focused attention on the common problems facing the Lebanese population as a whole, as well as on the shared pain caused by economic collapse. They used the inclusive hashtag #Sectarianism\_Shields\_Corruption on Twitter, demonstrating their power as a safety net against further spirals of escalation. As one member of the group put it, “sectarian strife is very counter-productive to what the Lebanese are trying to achieve in their peaceful mobilisation. Sunnis, Shia, Druze and Christians, we share one country, suffering from the same problems.”

# Influencers for peace

Senior Project  
Manager at  
the Berghof  
Foundation  
in Beirut

Often when people think about social media, negative images of the spread of disinformation come to mind. Yet social media can also be a force for good. How can social media support peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts?

As with every aspect of life, the human factor is the primary determinant of outcomes: everything can be used in either a good or a bad way, according to the will of the initiating person. It is imperative that we realise (and utilise) the positive influence of social media and how it can be used to transform individuals, societies, and even governments. Social media can indeed help spread peace, encourage dialogue among people from different backgrounds and clarify perceptions or misunderstandings. Communication is vital in promoting tolerance and mutual understanding, and social media is an ideal tool for that.

Berghof provides training and enables meetings between influencers from across the political and religious spectrum in Lebanon. What is your personal highlight of this work?

At times of increased friction and discord, the social media influencers we are working with have left their mark on the national scene. At several critical instances during the protests in 2019 and 2020, the social media influencers group intervened to proactively de-escalate tensions. When clashes occurred between different groups and/or with security forces, they developed joint campaigns to call for renouncing violence, ending scapegoating and maintaining the inclusive and cross-sectarian character of the protests. They reach huge audiences by connecting their networks and followers across the divides.

How did the 2020 explosion in Beirut affect your work?

The explosion had a great impact on everyone in Lebanon: the pain and the fear it caused hit deep, and people have still not got over it to this day. It happened at the beginning of August 2020, just as the second phase of our project was about to launch, which was a huge distraction. For the following few weeks, the explosion, rumours and consequences were the only thing people could talk about. Social media was consumed by that, and so

were the influencers we are working with. A resulting major change in the project environment was the heightening of polarisation and the hardening of animosities in the general population, and the social media influencers reflected and tried to counter that.

What are the biggest challenges and opportunities when bringing social media influencers from different religious groups together? What are your hopes for this kind of work for the future?

In bringing social media influencers together to pacify a situation, a lot of one-on-one work has to be done, involving very tactful and empathetic human interaction. Trying to overcome deeply engrained obstacles and to reverse time-hardened hostilities requires genuine care and creative outreach, dipping into the realm of conflict psychology. Short-term interventions that expect to achieve real and lasting impact are amateurish and often backfire, causing harm and wasting material resources as well as the goodwill of stakeholders. I hope that everyone involved in planning and executing such efforts has the appropriate personal commitment and the long-term resources needed to achieve success.





Interview

Hanadi  
Sheikh Najib

Preacher and  
Journalist

# Positive change through working with Imams



What is your background and how did you end up doing peacebuilding work?

My main purpose is to spread a message of acceptance of varying perspectives. For me, the concept of peace stems from Islam itself. Being a media specialist with an Islamic background, I focus on delivering the peaceful message of Islam and empowering youth with the skills to establish a society based on peace and understanding. I began my career as editor-in-chief of the magazine 'Ghadi-غدي', but it has been essentially through my work with the Berghof Foundation that I have been able to develop my peacebuilding work.

Can you tell us more about your work with Berghof?

I started working with Berghof in 2015 when I felt it was my duty to join local projects that promote dialogue and a moderate religious discourse. In a conference at Dar al-Fatwa, the official Islamic institution in Lebanon and Berghof's partner from 2015 until 2018, I was the only woman speaker among traditional male political figures. This was a pivotal moment both for me and indeed for the religious institution, proving that women can and should play an active role within it. My experience with Dar al-Fatwa was not without its difficulties and challenges, of course — it is a very conservative institution. In addition, I participated in a dialogue facilitation and mediation training course held by Berghof, which enabled me to conduct a training programme for prominent religious figures in various Lebanese regions, including a Media and Communication Training Programme for Imams. I hope to continue this initiative by further equipping promising figures with the skills they need to effect positive change using their public platform.

What was the greatest challenge or difficulty you encountered?

Given the current Lebanese situation, as well as the constraints due to COVID-19, one of the greatest challenges has been to continue working on our projects. It was also exceedingly difficult to clarify to the stakeholders from different religious backgrounds that their values and Berghof's values are one and the same, and that their work with the organisation is an equal partnership.

Looking at the situation today, what do you personally take away from this work?

Since 2015, my work with Berghof has opened many new doors. There are a lot of people I wouldn't have met had it not been for Berghof and my work with the organisation. On a personal level, I have become more accepting and understanding of differences in opinion within the Sunni sect itself, and across different sects. I have gained the patience necessary to work towards finding common ground and the convergence of opinions. I hope I can continue working on these initiatives and take them to different Lebanese regions next.

What are your biggest hopes and fears for the situation in your country?

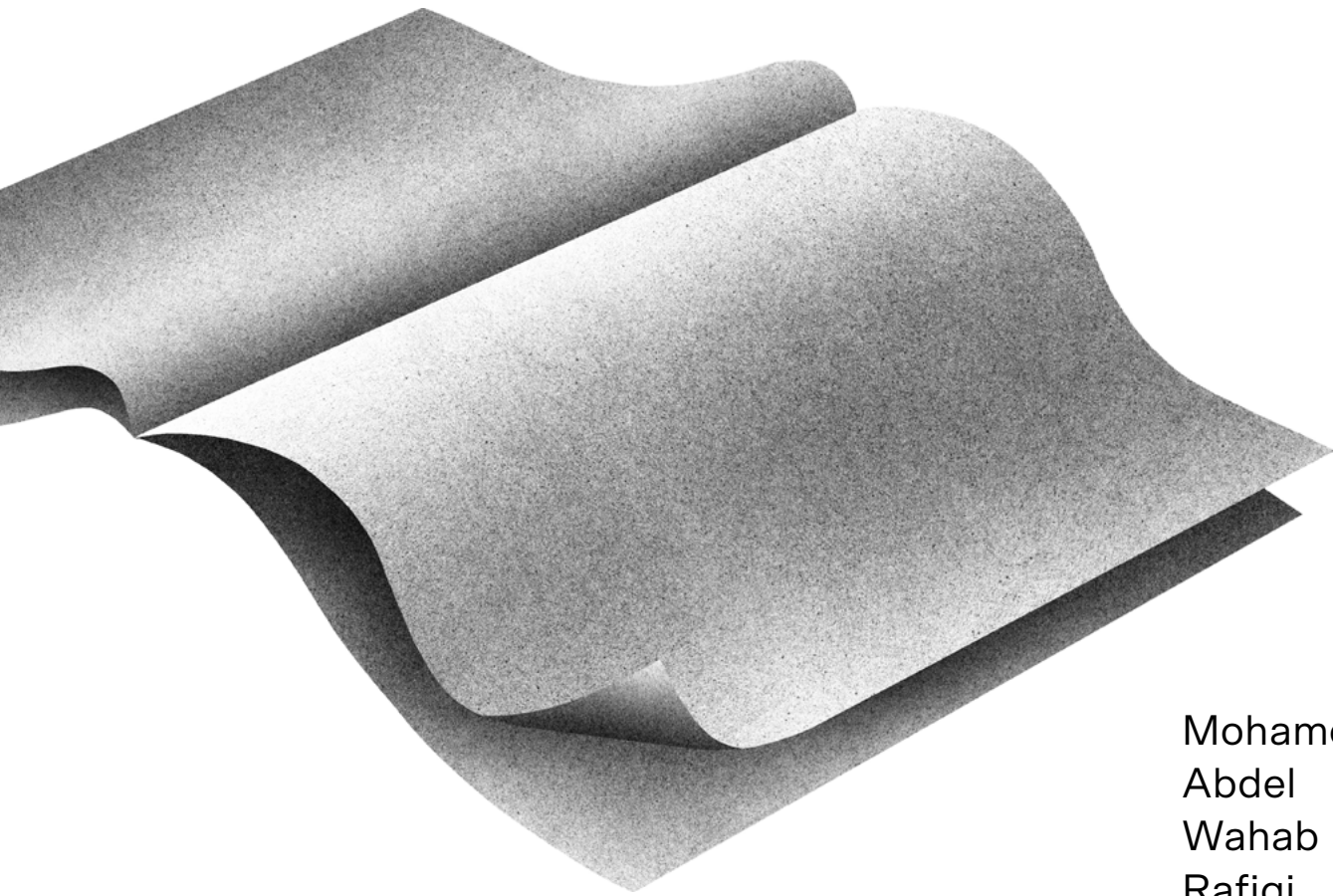
My source of hope and inspiration comes from anyone who perseveres and continues to work in spite of the circumstances. I have met countless inspiring individuals, and it is their passion and dedication that keep me going and give me the strength to continue. The most dangerous thing is for people to focus on personal gain. I believe that one should always maintain a balance between working towards your interests and your set of beliefs, while taking a step towards others.

What would you like people who don't know your context to understand?

My message is a message of peace. While the circumstances or the means may vary, my message is consistent and serves as a base for all my work. While working with Berghof, I was never asked to change my opinion or adopt new ideals, but to share my own, unique experience. I was given absolute freedom to express my own opinion. I want to thank Berghof for expanding my horizons and equipping me with the necessary skills.

# Preventing extremism in prisons

Interview



Mohamed  
Abdel  
Wahab  
Rafiqi

Founder and  
President of  
Al-Mizane  
platform

What is your background, and how did you end up doing peacebuilding work?

My involvement in peacebuilding comes from a very personal experience. Having grown up in a religious, Salafi environment and having received a typical religious education in Morocco, I became one of the prominent sheikhs in the Moroccan Salafi movement. Due to this background, I have extensive experience regarding the contributory factors behind violent extremism — psychological, socioeconomic and political — and their religious references. I am determined to raise awareness about the dangers of extremism, to ensure that others do not go through the suffering I experienced while I was in prison.

Can you tell us more about your work with Berghof?

My work with the Berghof Foundation can be divided into two strands. Firstly, I am part of the regional network of experts that Berghof set up to enhance religious tolerance and address violent extremism in Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon and Morocco. The network is made up of Middle East experts who meet either online or in person. Since the beginning of my involvement in 2018, the network has helped me be part of a regional exchange of diverse opinions, experiences and points of view, as well as knowledge-sharing among fellow members of the network.

Secondly, I have created a manual for preventing violent extremism in prisons, which was used in a local training event on “Extremism in Prisons between De-radicalisation Programmes and Re-integration.” I met with the network working group on prisons and preventing violent extremism. I talked to interlocutors in Tripoli and Beirut and shared best practices, lessons learned and prevention strategies used in Morocco.

What do you think was the most important achievement of the project/process you were working on with Berghof?

The most important achievement was the manual, as well as being able to discuss it during the local initiative training workshops in Lebanon, thereby combining the theoretical with the practical. I believe that these workshops were insightful and enriching, because I was able to learn more about

the Lebanese experience when it comes to Islamist prisoners and could adapt the manual accordingly.

What was the greatest challenge or difficulty you encountered?

Convincing imprisoned Islamists of the theoretical, practical and psychological factors behind radicalisation. Also, such projects require a great deal of support from official institutions, otherwise their chance of success is much lower. The connections and rapports that the Berghof Foundation has built over time helped a lot in that regard. I was able to address key decision-makers such as Members of Parliament, lawyers from the Lebanese Bar Association, Muftis and prominent Muslim scholars during my visit to Lebanon.

Looking at the situation today, what do you personally take away from this work?

My work in Lebanon opened my eyes to different factors that contribute to violent extremism. I felt as if I was discovering a different phenomenon, all while rediscovering nuances to the issue as a whole. This led me to new perceptions of violent extremism in the Arab world. Today, I am still in contact with the working group on prisons and preventing violent extremism in Lebanon.

How are you planning to continue your work with Berghof in the future?

Regarding the manual, I am hoping that the regional network of experts will be able to provide me with feedback. That feedback will then be incorporated into the manual, further refining insights into the causes and signs of violent extremism. I will take part in a number of projects and hope that I will be able to combine all my efforts into one unified campaign to prevent violent extremism. I also hope that my manual will eventually be the official and approved manual used in prisons.

## Slowly but surely Multi-stakeholder dialogue in territorial conflicts

In Colombia's northern department of Norte de Santander, and especially in its Catatumbo region, the role of dialogue in public sector planning has had a limited appeal to many. For local authorities, it was an unwelcome task best shipped off to a consultant to do at her desk; for the armed groups, it was something to sabotage; and for the small-scale farmers and indigenous community of the Barí, it was a process that at best ignored them or, in a worst case, completely misunderstood their cultural needs and curbed their access to income.

The region is notorious as a hotspot of armed political violence. After the peace agreement between the Colombian government and the FARC guerrillas, a turf battle among some of the remaining armed groups erupted, and to this day, the region faces challenges relating to development and violence. When we started working in Norte de Santander in 2015, we soon realised that we could make the most effective contribution by assisting local stakeholders to set up a legitimate and credible space for dialogue — in its best transformative sense. This did not mean a half-day session of being informed and voicing concerns about local public planning, nor a short-lived effort to pacify the latest protest and street blockades, but a space allowing a broad range of stakeholders to tell others about their concerns and in turn learn more about others' needs and perspectives.

As a part of the Como-Berghof consortium, which has been supporting the German development agency GIZ's ProPaz programme, we have been working on territorial peace in three ways: by supporting conflict transformation, violence prevention and later the implementation of the peace agreement, signed at the end of 2016. Our engagement has taken place on the local level, as this



Wolam speaking at the “Dialogue Platform in the Catatumbo,” October 2017 in Ocaña. Photo: Lorena Fernández



example shows, but also on the departmental and national level, where policies on dialogue and peace have been developed, allowing these spheres to better inform each other and create synergies.

As is often the case, much invisible groundwork needed to be done before the team took visible action, in order to avoid putting actors at risk, leaving some out, or being instrumentalised. After much trust-building and analysis, our entry point was an academic course on regional development run by the Socio-Economic and Environmental Observatory in the Catatumbo Region (OSEARC) of the regional university, where our advisor José Abad held a course on 'Do No Harm'. The participants concluded that their different visions on the development of their region reflected the diversity of their interpretations and perspectives, and recognized that they often discarded others' views without really knowing them. Building on the initial curiosity to learn about each other's needs, we continued to engage with the participants, including small-scale farmers with diverse and conflicting political views, local political representatives often closely linked to traditional powers, the Catholic Church, and professors and students from the regional university.

When José first engaged with all the various stakeholders, the peace negotiations were still ongoing. In line with the values and principles underlying all our work, he reiterated that his role was not to decide on issues or curb anyone's political action, but to facilitate a space with a few simple rules that would enable all participants to engage in conversations in order to bring about mutual understanding.

In the meetings, facilitated by José together with the team of the local observatory for environmental conflicts, confidence in the usefulness

of the new way of engaging increased, enabling some unlikely alliances to emerge. For example, the Barí and the small-scale farmer-settlers, historically at odds over land use in the Barí's territory, discovered that their needs were not necessarily contradictory, and that the government bore much of the responsibility for addressing their shared demands.

Supporting a local team by continually building capacity was a good way of using our own role and catalysing change as an external actor, especially when aiming to create conditions to sustain this change after our project ends. Once the local team emerged as a credible actor and received a mandate from all stakeholders to facilitate this sort of exchange in the future, we focused on their capacities for multi-stakeholder dialogue. That process went well beyond training and advice, and covered teambuilding, facilitation training and support, as well as an organisational development component to bolster efforts aimed at supporting rural reform and local development planning.

By 2020, despite Covid-19 restrictions affecting the local participatory planning processes, *convivencia* (living together) agreements between the Barí and the settlers have consolidated, and their organisations have defined joint positions vis-à-vis the national government around the issue of expanding the Barí reserve and creating a reserve for the farmer-settlers. Through a regional transformative dialogue, they have established alternative forms of dealing with conflicts and have managed to transform what had formerly divided them into a joint plan.





Supporting  
peace  
processes  
on various  
tracks

With the end of the Cold War, the attention of conflict transformation research and practice shifted to civil conflicts — and with it our strategic focus. Starting in Sri Lanka, we have spent the last 20 years providing mediation and negotiation support in various peace processes — whether supporting the official process, building negotiation capacities of conflict parties, strengthening insider mediators, or offering policy advice and training to mediation teams. Our work has also contributed to the advancement of new mediation concepts and approaches.

# Supporting inclusive peacebuilding efforts on different tracks



Colombo, Sri Lanka in the early 1990s.  
Photo: Creative Commons (CC BY 3.0) by qwesy qwesy / Panoramio

While the 1990s witnessed a significant number of successful peace accords and an emerging optimism about the realisation and diffusion of a 'liberal peace' doctrine, the developments in Sri Lanka gave little cause for hope. After a failed attempt at peace talks with the Tamil Tigers (LTTE) under President Chandrika Kumaratunga, Sri Lanka disintegrated into the third phase of a brutal civil war that raged across the island's north and east. It was fuelled by anti-Tamil pogroms, suicide attacks by the LTTE, excessive use of landmines, the recruitment of underage minors and the inability of the two dominant Sinhala parties to find a reasonable compromise on power-sharing.

At the end of the decade, the LTTE had achieved a powerful military position and declared a unilateral ceasefire. The ceasefire was later reciprocated by the government, opening the space for capacity- and confidence-building activities that would ultimately pave the way for meaningful negotiations between the warring parties.

This was the context when the Berghof Foundation became active in Sri Lanka in 2001 at the invitation of the Government of Sri Lanka and with support from the Swiss Department of Foreign Affairs and the German Development Ministry. The overarching goal was to strengthen local peacebuilding capacities and create spaces for dialogue to improve relations and trust among the warring parties and its constituencies.

Designed as a comprehensive intervention on different levels, the Berghof Foundation's engagement particularly focused on developing opportunities for dialogue and problem-solving, on building the capacities of conflict parties and civil society, and on promoting multiple futures for a peaceful Sri Lanka through constitutional and state reform and power-sharing.

In order to foster a more informed peace process, we introduced state-of-the-art negotiation and mediation practices to representatives from both conflict parties and shared knowledge from

other peace processes. High-level politicians and experts from Northern Ireland and South Africa who had played a key role in the negotiations and transformation processes in their countries provided key insights and lessons learned. They explained why they had changed their attitudes towards a compromise and how this had helped transform the conflict and change their country for the better. To implement these activities on the ground, we established the Resource Network for Conflict Studies and Transformation Sri Lanka (RNCST), our first formal office outside Germany. With around 20 staff members, most of whom were locally hired, the RNCST provided a safe space for both conflict parties to explore their interest and readiness to engage in dialogue with each other. The aim was to increase empathy and overcome mutual mistrust after decades of war and hostility, and to develop ideas and ultimately a roadmap for a future peace process.

Unfortunately, our operations ended abruptly when hostilities resumed in 2008 and when the visas of key Berghof personnel were not extended. Over the course of its engagement in Sri Lanka, the Berghof Foundation contributed to a range of new initiatives and ideas that aimed to address the protracted conflict and supported more than 200 projects and established a network of civil society organisations and individuals in support of peace work that endured long after the programme ended. The Berghof Foundation was also instrumental in the establishment of a peace secretariat for Muslims, a neglected minority in Sri Lanka that was not represented at the peace table at that time. Our work with the Sri Lankan and Tamil diasporas on development and peace was commended by many international scholars for its pioneering character at the nexus of diaspora and conflict transformation. Most notably, however, we succeeded in creating inclusive dialogue spaces in an otherwise exclusive, polarised and ethnicised context.

# How to engage with all parties in times of war?

Yemen has a long history of conflict. In 2012, the country embarked on an ambitious political transition process that was meant to lead to a federal, democratic state. The Berghof Foundation and its Yemeni partner organisation PDF (Political Development Forum) started providing process support to the Yemeni National Dialogue Conference (NDC) and offered opportunities for consensus-building. When disagreements and mistrust between the parties quickly grew during the implementation process following the NDC, the Yemeni parties resorted to violence and the transition process faltered in 2014. Ultimately, Ansar Allah/the Houthis and their allies (among them the former long-time president Ali Abdallah Saleh) took the capital Sana'a by force. President Hadi and his government had to relocate to Aden, in the south of Yemen, and Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. In March 2015, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, together with a number of supporting countries, entered the war.

Since then the country has been trapped in a cycle of violence, with no single actor being able to dominate militarily or take control of the whole country. Yemen has become increasingly fragmented: politically, territorially and socially. For Berghof and PDF, a new question arose: how to support efforts for a political solution when the warring parties refuse to acknowledge each other and view any effort to engage with the other side as a hostile act?

As Berghof and PDF had gained a high level of trust among Yemeni political elites during the NDC, we were able to establish inclusive national fora for political dialogue in 2015. Representation was based on consensual criteria as defined by the NDC, meetings took (and still take) place monthly in Sana'a, Taiz, and later in Aden. In addition, we facilitated inclusive dialogue meetings in other countries in the Middle East and Germany to ensure that representatives of all parties could participate. The meetings covered all aspects of the conflict: the political and security/military dimensions, a roadmap for continuing the political dialogue and completing the political transition process, options

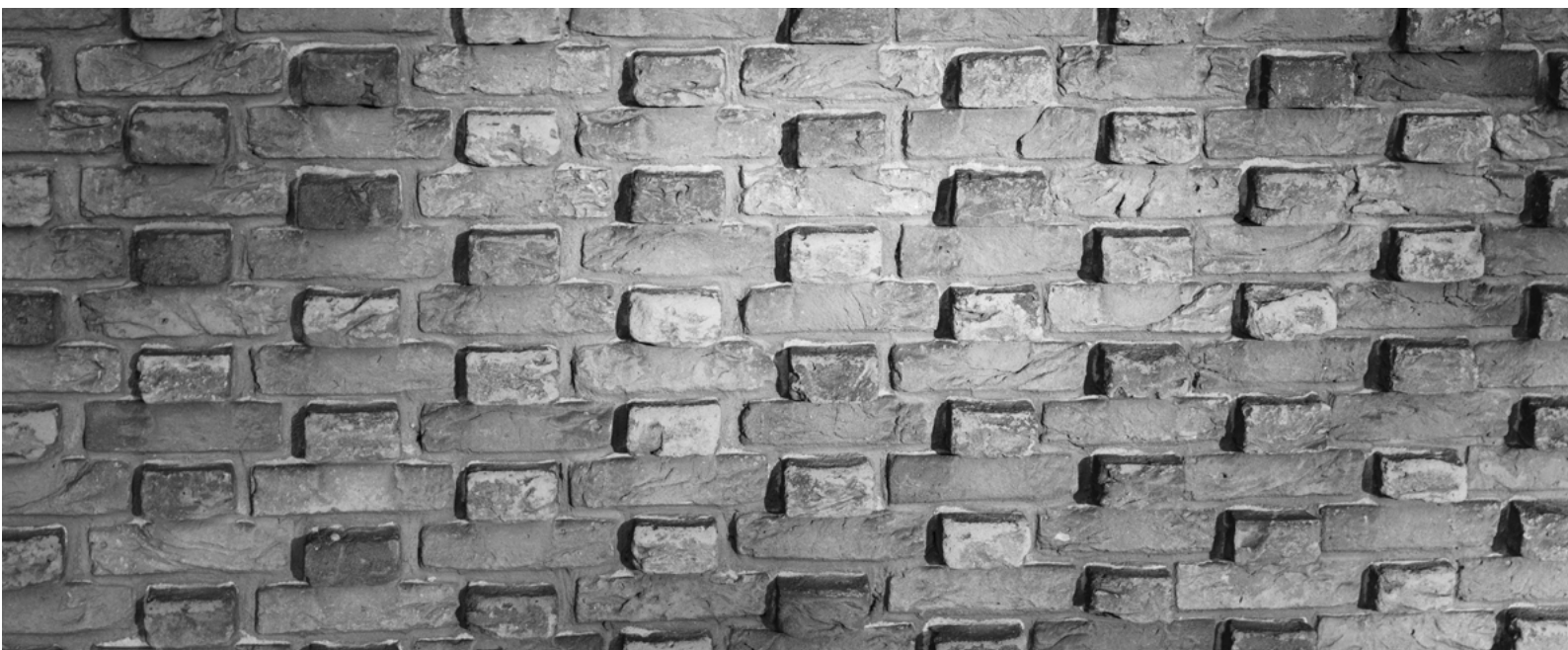
for state formation and the status of the South. We also convened dialogue sessions on the economic and financial dimensions of the war and on options to restart the political process.

Building on the long-established relations of trust and the fact that we did not take substantive positions but provided opportunities for dialogue, the parties came to view the meetings as useful and requested continuous support. We spent a lot of time on preparations, making sure to choose relevant topics, the right format and appropriate level of participation. Our partnership with PDF, with their in-depth contextual knowledge and excellent relations with political actors across the spectrum, was one of the key factors that helped keep the meetings relevant, trusted and useful.

The meetings were closely coordinated with the UN Special Envoy and his team and with the German Federal Foreign Office, our main donor and partner. The meetings produced a number of tangible outcomes: they helped parties generate new ideas and contributed to building consensus on topics and structures for the peace process. Ahead of the peace negotiations in Kuwait in 2016, for instance, some of the questions relating to the formula and sequencing of the negotiations were

discussed in our consultations with Yemeni parties and some specific ideas on consensual mechanisms were initially formulated in our meetings. Starting in 2018, discussions and preparations of formal talks focused on how to revitalise the Yemeni state and on the crucial role of local authorities. At a local level, the dialogues were temporarily successful in easing tension and secured, for example, a prisoner exchange in Taiz. In addition, we complemented political discussions with on-the-ground support to strengthen inclusive local governance in a number of governorates and enhance community safety initiatives in several cities.

Today, we have hope for new diplomatic initiatives. For this purpose, in 2020 we started involving Yemen's regional neighbours in discussions about options for Yemen's future and regional 'red lines'. As the new US administration has promised to re-engage in the Gulf and support ending the war in Yemen, there is reason to believe that a fresh diplomatic initiative based on a new regional and international understanding would provide a strong incentive for the Yemeni actors to come together and revitalise efforts for a Yemeni-led political solution. Berghof and its partner PDF are well-placed and ready to continue supporting them.





# Experiences of a facilitator

Dr Nadia  
al-Kwkabani

Programme  
Manager at  
the Political  
Development  
Forum



You're an architect by training and are now doing peacebuilding work. How did that come about?

I teach at Sanaa University. When the demonstrations began outside the University in Change Square in 2011, I was one of the academics who supported the protests and held teach-ins on the revolution at the Square. Later, I was invited to become part of the National Dialogue Conference that was initiated as a result of the protests. That's how I became involved in peacebuilding: out of the conviction that Yemen needed the efforts of all Yemenis, especially women, to work on dialogue, on finding solutions and creating a political process.

What was your exact role in the Yemeni National Dialogue?

After the end of the National Dialogue, I became part of a consultation group convened by the Political Development Forum and the Berghof Foundation. The group was designed to advise on the implementation of the outcomes of the National Dialogue. After the war broke out, the group kept meeting to try to find a political solution to the conflict and I became the facilitator of our meetings. I facilitated different meetings between conflict parties, discussing power-sharing, maps and federations, as well as process-related issues. We shared the results with the United Nations Envoy's office. In 2018, I became Programme Manager at the Political Development Forum and oversaw all the joint projects with Berghof.

Working as a facilitator for political meetings and dialogues is not easy. It was hard, especially at first, when the war started and everything became polarised. It was a risk for the different sides of the conflict to sit together and to talk — there was a lot of nervousness and harsh criticism and personal attacks. I always tried to find common ground to bridge arguments and conflicts. I learned to use breaks strategically to defuse conflicts or encourage participants to talk and reconnect on a personal level. I have learned two important lessons from this work. Preparation is key: the facilitator needs to know about people's background, what is important to them, and how they are interacting. And the facilitator has to have an understanding of the agenda points and key issues. Always prepare very well!

What were your favourite and your most difficult moments in your peacebuilding work over the past ten years?

I am proud of my role in the Yemeni National Dialogue, where I defended the rights of women and where we, the independent women's group in the Dialogue, managed to secure a 30 per cent quota for women in Parliament and other decision-making bodies. This was one of the main outcomes of the dialogue, which then was unfortunately not implemented due to the war. I am also proud of what we are doing now: working to build peace in the midst of war.

The war in Yemen — and everything that comes with that — has of course been tremendously challenging. For me personally, it was hard to continue working in these situations, to travel 10 or 12 hours to different cities to have meetings, or travel abroad. Having to go through checkpoints, dealing with insecurity has been challenging; it's not easy to move between different areas in the country. But I believe in what I am doing and this keeps me going.

What challenges do you see ahead, and what makes you hopeful?

I see many challenges. Continuing to work and to believe that the war will end is challenging, and it is already clear that what comes after — the transition — will not be easy. But this war will come to an end sooner or later, and we will cross these bridges when we come to them.

What makes me hopeful is that Yemenis are sick of war and ready for peace. Also the flexibility I saw in the meetings I facilitated makes me more optimistic. Some people are willing to compromise. That's actually one of the main secrets of success in this field: being optimistic.

Afghanistan



Turning  
confrontation  
into engagement

# Intra-Afghan Conference for Peace

“

Conciliation and nonviolent conflict transformation will stay the only viable path in Afghanistan.

For the past seven years, we have supported Afghan partners in that endeavour and we will continue to do so during the current transformation process and for as long as our support is requested and useful.

Hans-Joachim Giessmann  
Director Emeritus  
Berghof Foundation

On 7 and 8 July 2019, in a historic first, representatives of the Afghan government and society and the Taliban (all in their personal capacity) sat down together for a dialogue meeting in Doha, Qatar. The Intra-Afghan Conference for Peace, co-hosted by the German and Qatari governments, brought together 61 Afghans from a wide range of political and societal groups to discuss shared interests and the question of what a peace process could eventually look like. Having previously provided key Afghan stakeholders with various capacity-building and training measures for several years, the Berghof Foundation was invited by the German government to support the preparation and implementation of this event. The closed-door sessions, moderated by the Berghof Foundation, allowed for an initial building of trust and a common understanding of shared grievances and pain. This was particularly challenging in light of the deep mistrust and suspicion between the parties, created by four decades of armed conflict. Through an open and unfiltered exchange, participants found significant common ground and identified issues of divergence and disagreement. At the end, they approved a joint declaration, which was

widely considered by the public to be a first step towards an inclusive peace process. All sides agreed to reduce violence and gave assurances on fundamental rights for women and religious minorities. The resolution also called for trust-building measures and outlined a roadmap for an inclusive peace process.

Upon their return to Kabul, civil society activists welcomed the participants with flowers and the release of peace doves as an expression of the hope generated by the event within Afghan society. That hope and optimism have been severely tested since then. The path to intra-Afghan negotiations, which finally started in September 2020, was paved with disillusionment and setbacks amid ongoing and escalating violence in almost all parts of Afghanistan. However, after four decades of armed conflict, it has become clear to most people that the conflict cannot be solved by military means nor can the solution be dictated from the outside. While support from international actors is often welcomed by all sides, only a truly Afghan-owned and Afghan-led process can bring about viable solutions, a reduction in violence and, ultimately, a sustainable, comprehensive and dignified peace.

Interview

Basir  
Feda

Head of Unit  
Afghanistan  
and Central/South  
Asia at the Berghof  
Foundation

# Inside the Intra- Afghan Conference for Peace





The article on the previous page describes the Intra-Afghan Conference for Peace, which you facilitated. How did you experience it personally?

I had been assigned the role of a facilitator at the very last minute and, to be honest, I was neither prepared nor ready. Our Afghan partners and the German Federal Foreign Office put an enormous amount of political capital and trust into this conference, which made this an extremely daunting task.

But while pressure and responsibility were high, the reward was even higher. The outcome statement in which all participants agreed to reduce violence and identified conditions and cornerstones of a roadmap for peace was, of course, a huge achievement, but what was even more valuable and rewarding was to witness what happened in the room. Participants opened up and shared their grievances and pain — sometimes quite emotionally. They started humanising each other and realised that they had a lot more in common and that no single party had a monopoly over religion or politics. This is the essence of a dialogue.

The Intra-Afghan Conference was a historic first. What made it possible, in your opinion?

First and foremost, trust: the parties' trust in each other but also the participants' trust in the conveners of the dialogue. This allowed us to take away the right of self-selection from the various groups and parties and put together a somewhat unusual list of participants. While past attempts at convening Afghan actors for a dialogue have been very elitist — and unsuccessful — we tried to be more inclusive in our selection of participants and invited people from different constituencies and various segments of society.

Even though there was criticism, which I believe is inevitable in such highly contested contexts, the dialogue and the way participants were selected received a lot of public support, which made it hard for anyone to openly and seriously undermine it.

You mention trust as a central prerequisite for dialogue and mediation support work. How did you manage to establish that trust with the different parties in Afghanistan?

I believe that this is mainly due to our long-standing engagement with all stakeholders. When we began our activities in Afghanistan in 2012/2013, we only worked with the High Peace Council. Once we got a better picture of all the actors and their interests and relations, we gradually expanded our engagement and started to provide capacity-building and technical support to a variety of actors, including the Taliban.

The latter was a particularly risky endeavour at the time, both for us as an organisation and for me personally, as I have family living in Afghanistan. But it is only through this technical support and the appreciation thereof — paired with my personal relationships and networks in Afghanistan — that we managed to build a relationship and develop trust with our Afghan partners.

The dialogue in itself was successful. To what extent did it also advance the peace process as a whole?

The dialogue conference and its outcome document were an opener for the formal intra-Afghan peace negotiations that started in September 2020. They provided a roadmap that paved the way to the current negotiation process and set an example of what can be achieved if outside actors do not interfere with Afghan ownership and Afghan leadership of the process.

We must do everything to ensure that these principles are also adhered to in the current negotiations. Just like the dialogue conference, the peace process will only succeed if it is truly Afghan-owned and if there is no interference or distraction from impatient external actors driven by their own domestic politics.

Would a peace agreement also mean the end of Berghof's engagement?

Irrespective of what is achieved, we will provide our support as long as it is requested, keeping in mind that a peace agreement is only one step on a long and difficult path towards sustainable peace in Afghanistan. It is for this reason that we are increasingly focused on peace infrastructures. The aim is to turn the negative peace secured by an eventual agreement and characterised by the absence of violence into a positive peace that brings about a sustainable transformation of the conflict.



# Supporting the Oromo-Amhara dialogue process

Ethiopia

Since the beginning of 2020, the Berghof Foundation has supported the Oromo-Amhara Dialogue Process as part of its Ethiopian multitrack dialogue support project. The Oromo and Amhara ethnic groups are the largest in Ethiopia, together accounting for over 55 million people, more than the populations of countries such as Kenya, Spain or Colombia. In 2018, a temporary political alliance between them within the former ruling party, the Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), led to the appointment of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who expedited an ambitious reform agenda. However, political competition, disputed land rights and historical grievances have strained the relationship between the two communities in the past. As the political space opened up due to the reforms, tensions between the Amhara and Oromo communities escalated, leading to outbreaks of ethnically targeted violence.

In November 2019, Oromo and Amhara students were killed at public universities due to their ethnicity. In response, the federal government initiated the Oromo-Amhara Dialogue Process – supported by the Berghof Foundation and its partner organisation, the Centre for Dialogue, Research and Cooperation (CDRC). Facilitated by a quartet of Ethiopian mediators with Oromo and Amhara ethnic origins, the process aims to de-escalate tensions and foster unity and stability by addressing the root causes of violence between the communities. In order to achieve this, the project supports inclusive dialogue conferences with representatives from all sectors of society, as well as forums between the leaders of the various political parties.

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The Berghof Foundation supports the Amhara-Oromo dialogue, potentially a sub-programme of the Ethiopian National Dialogue, not only financially, but even more importantly by providing insights from other similar efforts. The effort is now on the verge of making an important breakthrough thanks to the support from the Berghof Foundation. It has the potential to contribute to the overall National Dialogue.

Leenco Lata  
Member of the mediation team facilitating  
the Oromo-Amhara Dialogue Process

After months of negotiations, the political parties signed a historic interim agreement on 10 common positions on 23 September 2020 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. The positions include calling for an inclusive National Dialogue, building a democratic system, promoting peace and security, and organising projects that strengthen people-to-people relations. Subsequent dialogue conferences in Adama in October 2020 and in Bahir Dar in January 2021 created space for broader discussion among all sectors of society on the interim agreement, particularly addressing the importance of democratic values and institutions and political transitions. These conferences expanded attendance to include representatives and political parties from other ethnic groups and regions due to the national relevance of the topics. The discussions were very well-received and participants requested other regions throughout Ethiopia to host future conferences and establish similar dialogue processes to address other inter-ethnic divides.

The Oromo-Amhara Dialogue Process is only the beginning, and difficult and long-term issues have yet to be discussed. Based on the interim agreement reached, further rounds of stakeholder consultations will address the operationalisation of the common positions. Simultaneously, the Ethiopian mediators, with support from the Berghof Foundation, will continue to deepen the dialogue among political parties with a view to facilitating common ground on outstanding issues concerning the relationship between the two largest subnational entities on the African continent.

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Because we are just beginning to build a democratic system in Ethiopia, discussions like these are very important... [W]hen we come together and discuss our ideas with each other, that hatred will slowly be removed and we will gradually form closer ties. The political tension between parties and the hate that is being spread in the community are addressed by such discussions. This will be vital in creating a peaceful and stable political environment.

Participant  
Adama Conference  
October 2020



# Working with resistance and liberation movements

We believe that violent conflicts can only be transformed if all parties involved in or affected by the conflict are taken into account — including those that many see as too extreme. Since 2006, we have worked with resistance and liberation movements, studying and supporting them on their way towards peaceful political participation.

## The Basque Country

If states won't do it,  
civil society can

International  
support for  
bottom-up  
peacebuilding

The history of the Basque conflict since the early 1980s has been marked by political violence and polarisation, but also by citizen activism for peace. After several aborted peace processes, the 2011 Aiete peace conference, which brought together leaders of Basque parties as well as several international figures including Kofi Annan and Bertie Ahern, provided fresh impetus for the conflict's resolution. Three days after the conference, the armed separatist group Euskadi Ta Askatasuna — better known by its acronym ETA — announced a unilateral ceasefire and called on Spain and France to open talks. However, the Spanish government remained firmly opposed to direct negotiations.

Following the conference and in the absence of a formal peace process, the Berghof Foundation and several other international initiatives began to support bottom-up conflict transformation in the Basque Country, leading to a strengthening of peace-oriented voices in the pro-independence movement and eventually making a significant contribution to peaceful conflict resolution. With this support, Basque organisations kept up the momentum for peace throughout the ebbs and flows of a prolonged transition between 2011 and 2018.

An International Contact Group made up of independent experts was formed in 2011 to facilitate dialogue among political actors in the Basque regions. It was complemented by an International Verification Commission tasked with monitoring the ceasefire and later the disarmament and dissolution of ETA. The Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, a Swiss NGO, provided discreet backchannel facilitation and shuttle diplomacy with the Spanish government. Finally, the Berghof Foundation and Conciliation Resources offered process and substantive support to various social actors in the Basque Country. In doing so, we subtly influenced the pro-independence movement by encouraging advocates for peace and enhanced the confidence and expertise of Basque peace activists and civil society groups.

The Basque Social Forum for Peace, set up in 2013, illustrates the centrality of civil society in promoting a 'unilateral' peace process. The Forum aimed to channel the widespread public support for a peace process into concrete proposals and sought to promote consensus-building among political actors. It included a diversity of perspectives by involving victims of violence, prisoner rights groups, conflict resolution associations, trade unions and political parties. Besides the first forum's 700 participants, 500 groups and citizens made submissions on human rights, prisoner integration and memory and reconciliation issues through a dedicated website. In 2016, the Permanent Social Forum, comprising 17 Basque civil society organisations, was founded as a successor body. Over the years, the Permanent Social Forum formulated and promoted key policy recommendations that were later adopted by political parties and ETA itself.

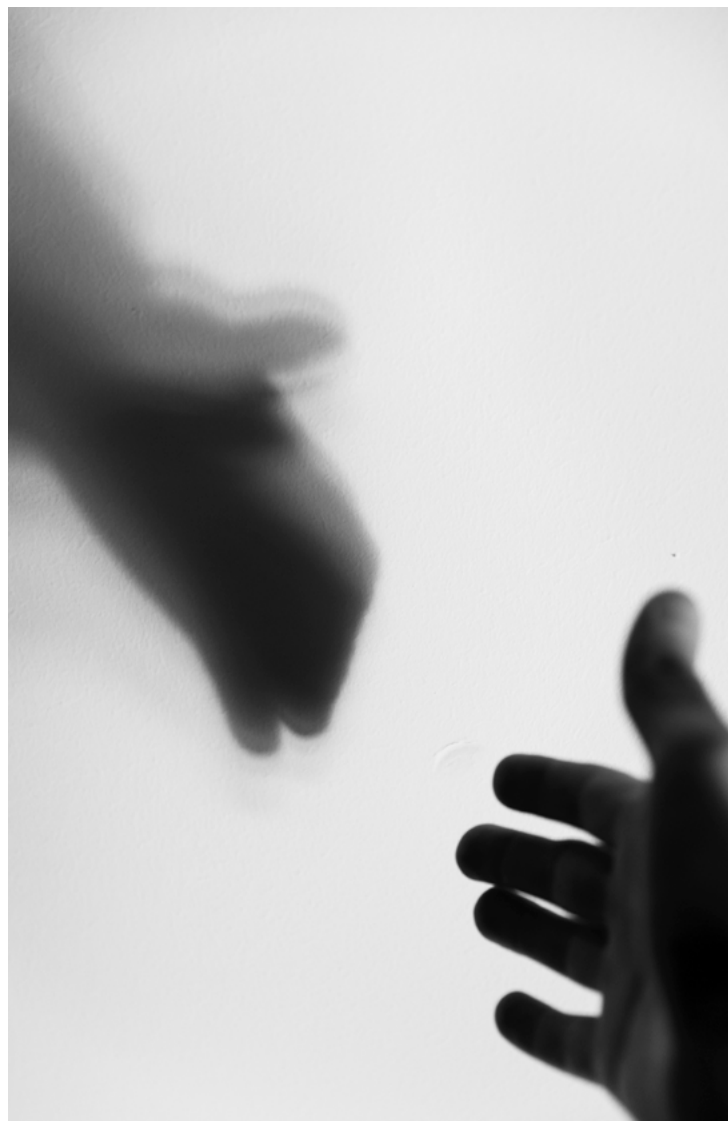


Berghof Foundation staff provided various forms of discreet and public support, including process support, feeding lessons learned from other international contexts into thematic discussions, and facilitating strategic planning and deadlock-breaking workshops with forum conveners. They also advised on and presented forum recommendations and published studies by Basque civil society and political figures on lessons learned from the Basque peace process. Berghof additionally hosted peer advice sessions between Basque activists and political leaders from other post-war countries, and conducted media engagements to recognise the progress made and encourage further steps for peace. Our staff also took public positions in defence of prominent activists who took personal risks for peace, both in the media and by testifying at official trials.

In 2018, a formal peace conference at Cambo-les-Bains in Southwestern France recognised “the progress done since 2011 to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region,” including the full disarmament of ETA (its weapons were handed over to French authorities by local peace activists through the International Verification Commission) in 2017, and the disbanding of the armed organisation in 2018.

Both processes were driven forward by one conflict party, outside of a formal peace process, but with the active participation of local civil society. The long-term support provided by the Berghof Foundation and other peacebuilding organisations, in a spirit of collegial trust and coordination, and with full respect for local ownership, was a crucial ingredient in conflict transformation in the Basque Country — despite the glaring lack of engagement by the Spanish government.

The process offers unique inspiration for peacebuilding practitioners around the world. Our deepest hope is that the dissolution of ETA will help address the fate of victims and prisoners, as well as the political, cultural and historical root causes of the conflict.





Anaiz  
Funosas

Founder and  
president of the  
civil movement  
for peace Bake  
Bidea

# Putting civil society at the forefront

The article on the previous page highlights the role of civil society on the path to ETA's disbandment. Why is the role of civil society in the Basque peace process exceptional?

In the Northern (French) Basque Country, the absence of Basque institutions has meant that civil society has always played a very important role, both in the struggles related to the Basque language and in social activism that constructed alternatives in the agricultural and environmental sectors. This social activism has led to major advances such as the creation of the Basque Country Chamber of Agriculture and has placed civil society at the forefront of the struggle for disarmament and peace.

Bake Bidea is one of the most influential civil society actors. What was your organisation's role in the peace process?

The roadmap developed at the 2011 Aiete conference placed civil society at the heart of the advancement of the peace process. This inspired us to create the civil movement Bake Bidea a year later, which represents various political, labour and human rights organisations in the north with the aim of giving impetus to the Aiete roadmap.

We became the bridge between civil society and the elected representatives of the North Basque territory. Our forum brought together around 500 people, representing all the NGOs and the majority

of elected politicians in the North Basque Country, supported by international observers such as the Berghof Foundation. By structuring civil society around the peace process, we were able to create spaces of trust with politicians.

Civil society taking charge of the peace process was unprecedented. How did you prepare for this role?

I had always believed in a political solution to the conflict. In a phase of political confrontation, everything is perceived in a binary way, in two camps, the good and the bad. I had to deconstruct this paradigm, to learn the distinction between an enemy and a political opponent. I was privileged enough to be supported by activists and organisations like the Berghof Foundation. They taught us new methods to comprehend our situation and our objectives, to seek spaces of agreement and consensus, and to understand better the keys to a peace process. This led me to think differently about the future of my territory, and to seek a path to progress along with other people.

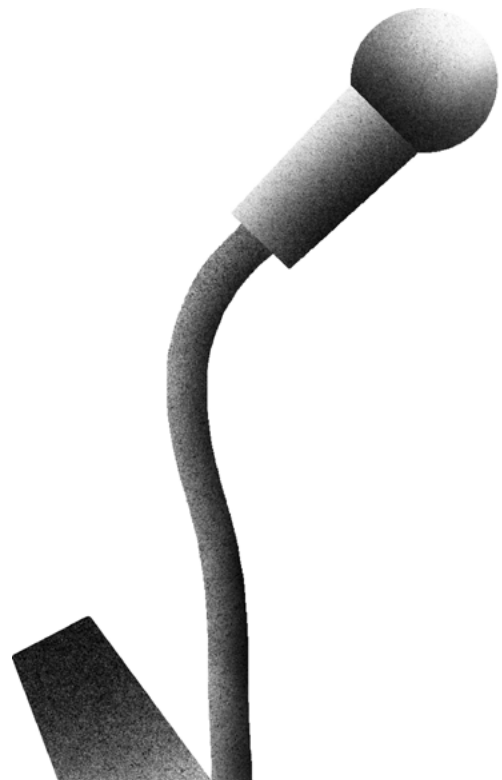
What was the key to your success?

We took the time to train ourselves. To be credible we had to be able to explain things. We brought in many experts, but they made us understand that we had the tools within ourselves to make things happen. I will never forget this experience during a forum in Biarritz to prepare the civil disarmament of ETA, when I asked the experts from the Berghof Foundation and Conciliation Resources to tell us how civil society was supporting disarmament processes in other countries. They looked at me and said, “there are no other examples, your case is unique!”

So the experts are not there to give us the solutions, but to help us take a step back from ourselves. Berghof’s support allowed us to let go, to embrace unusual experiences in order to make things happen.

The disarmament and disbandment were major milestones. But peace remains an ongoing process, as many other articles in this book show. With that in mind, what are the most important challenges for you and your movement in the years to come?

Ten years after Aiete, we still have a long way to go, especially in dealing with the issue of prisoners and victims. Since 2017, we have made a lot of progress on the conditions faced by political prisoners. Now we are working on the return of Basque prisoners and exiles. This is a major challenge, especially in a political context dominated by anti-terrorist rhetoric. The application of the law remains a major challenge in this process. Another challenge will be the work of memory to face our past. We need to design mechanisms for the recognition of all victims of conflict and their experiences of suffering, and to better understand the causes of the armed political conflict.



Although women comprise up to 30 per cent of the membership of various armed resistance and liberation movements (RLMs), their voices and aspirations are regularly sidelined during peace negotiations and post-war transitions. The role played by female combatants in conflict is often challenging to translate into participation in peace processes and post-war political settings, where men routinely assume leadership positions and expect women to find their place in the domestic sphere. The Berghof Foundation has been working with various RLMs on negotiation and process support since 2005. Most representatives in this project, and hence most of the supported actors, were men, prompting one of Berghof's long-term external consultants to pose the question: why not engage directly with women who have fought in RLMs?

This led to an intense process of network-building among female ex-combatants in various countries where RLMs were involved in negotiations and peace processes. In parallel, the search for funding for this work began and initially presented a challenge: female ex-combatants were a somewhat overlooked target group, their participation and leadership in post-war politics and reintegration into society being issues that did not feature prominently

on the international agenda. Additionally, both domestically and internationally, there was some lack of recognition of female ex-combatants' potential for driving positive change due to their past involvement in armed conflict and higher social marginalisation and stigmatisation compared to their male peers. After several attempts at searching for support, a small pilot project was eventually initiated in 2014 with funding from the Robert Bosch Foundation; subsequent grants were provided by the German development agency GIZ and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD).

In the last few years, the Berghof Foundation has supported women from 11 RLMs across three continents in their efforts to ensure more gender-inclusive and gender-participatory peace negotiations and post-war democratic transitions. The experiences of women from five other groups that underwent war-to-peace transitions 10-15 years ago have also been gathered and documented. For this, we worked with six local researchers, most of whom are themselves ex-combatants from demobilised armed groups in Aceh (Indonesia), Burundi, Mindanao (Philippines) and Nepal. The researchers collected and shared firsthand knowledge of the experiences of female



One of the participants in the film project prepares to be interviewed. Photo: Juan Camilo Cruz Orrego / Berghof Foundation

combatants and their engagement in socio-political transformation processes. Overall, they recorded 43 video interviews with their peers, identifying key lessons learned from their shared experiences. The resulting short film and booklet, ‘I Have To Speak’ — Voices of Female Ex-Combatants, seek to amplify some of the hidden and forgotten voices in conflict and show that women and their experiences of armed conflict need to be taken seriously in order to build sustainable peace. They also aim to show other female ex-combatants that they are not alone in their sense of being marginalised during such war-to-peace transitions, and that they have reason to feel empowered by their strength and resilience. The stories collected are those of friendship and camaraderie, of life and death, of perseverance and resistance, and of rebuilding lives after war and continuing the struggle in peaceful ways. Tripani Baijali, one of the researchers from Nepal, believes that “[the women’s] political awareness, skills and experiences should be transformed into useful human resources for the mainstream political scene by creating opportunities for them.” The interviews, film and stories are now used to train and build the capacities of women in RLMs who are currently in the process of emerging from armed struggle.

An example of tangible outcomes of Berghof’s support for female ex-combatants is our work with the Moro Islamic Liberation Front in Mindanao (Philippines), which successfully transitioned into a post-war political party following the peace agreement in 2014. Since then, the Berghof Foundation has supported its women’s brigade, the Bangsamoro Islamic Women Auxiliary Brigade (BIWAB), in preparing itself for the prospect of post-war organisational transition. In late 2019, together with our local partner organisation, the Moro Women Development and Cultural Center (MWDECC), the Berghof team conducted tailor-made training for 32 central BIWAB members looking at options for establishing a self-led post-war ex-combatant women’s civilian association and developing a mission and aim for such an association. Following the training, BIWAB legally transformed itself into a regional association aiming to self-lead collective capacity-building for the political participation of women ex-combatants and to support women in the implementation of the peace agreement and post-war politics in Mindanao.

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Not many organisations  
want to work with  
female ex-combatants  
because it is a sensitive  
issue.”

Shadia Marhaban

Consultant at the  
Berghof Foundation for  
Women in Resistance  
and Liberation  
Movements





Can you tell us more about the work you are involved in with Berghof? What is your role in it?

My first engagement with Berghof was in 2009, through the Resistance and Liberation Movements (RLM) project. I started to think: how come there is no focus on women in this work? I have always wanted to work with female ex-combatants. So we came up with a project idea and we talked about it for a year, a year and a half. It was just a dream at first, before we got to the German development agency GIZ and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) [the current donors of the project]. I said, let's try it. We would often encounter criticism: why work with ex-combatants? Other women would see them as violent, as troublemakers. But I disagree, I think that these women have a special responsibility and integrity. For me, it was like giving birth to a baby when the project happened. Not many organisations want to work with female ex-combatants because it is a sensitive issue.

What is your background, and how did you end up doing peacebuilding work?

I started being active in a resistance movement [in Indonesia]. When the peace process started in Aceh in 2005, I started the Aceh Women's League. I started advocating for women ex-combatants and encountered a lot of resistance. When I spoke to one of the ex-combatants about gender equality, the woman just started to laugh and said, "What do you mean?! We go into combat side-by-side with the men! We know about equality." Many women don't want to be victimised, they want people to know that it was a conscious decision to take up arms in the first place. When I started working with RLMs throughout Southeast Asia, I started to listen more: what are their stories, what are their thoughts? I would stay with them for weeks, talk to them, listen and learn. I know that being like them is not easy. Some people think they are heroes, some see them as villains. At the end of the day, it's about shared humanity.

What has been one experience with the women ex-combatants that stood out to you?

This was when I worked with S., an ex-combatant, who is now a teacher and has finished university. I couldn't have imagined that, and I didn't believe that S. would do this. I helped her find some money. When S. was to travel to Berlin [for a meeting], she didn't own a jacket or winter shoes, didn't know how to fasten the seatbelt on the plane. I had to buy everything for her to prepare her.

What was the greatest challenge or difficulty you have encountered in your work?

The educational background of the women. In Nepal, many women are illiterate or come from a low caste, while others are very high-level in their societies. How do you put them all together, for example at training events? It took us a while to figure this out. We use a lot of visuals and we always respect people's wish to use their own language.

The second challenge has been to make the stakeholders understand about the need for reintegrating woman ex-combatants. They just assumed that women would be ok with receiving general development money. This ignores the specific challenges of female ex-combatants, they need psychosocial support, and the impact of their involvement on their families has to be properly understood. Of course, they will say yes to making tablecloths, because they need anything they can get, economically. But their sources of income have to become more sustainable.

Looking at the situation today, what do you personally take away from this work?

I judge less, after understanding the whole thing, after talking to them. You might get lost in translation somewhere, and you really need to listen. I can see the impact of our work: the women we work with recognise themselves, they realise that they can be agents of change. Eventually, I would like to see a regional female ex-combatants meeting, or a global one. With women from Southeast Asia, Afghanistan, Asia Pacific, Kurdish areas, Kosovo — in order to build a bigger network.





Training the  
peacebuilders  
of tomorrow

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That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.

UNESCO

Advancing the peace capabilities of individuals, groups, societies and institutions through peace education has been at the centre of the Berghof Foundation’s work since its founding. For the past 50 years, we have provided spaces for young people to learn and experience peace; at the beginning in Germany, later around the world and for over 15 years also with the help of digital technologies and online dialogues.



Youth for peace  
Providing youth  
spaces for conflict  
transformation

Enduring peace requires more than a pact negotiated among elites. For peace to be sustainable, peace processes must reflect the interests of the population at large. This applies in particular to young people, who make up the majority of the population in many of the contexts in which we work. Yet rather than using the potential of young people as positive change-makers, peace processes — traditionally and predominantly led by older elites — often reduce young people to their experiences as either passive victims or as perpetrators, sidelining even those young people who played an active part as peacebuilders in non-violent peace movements. In the rare cases when young people are included in dialogue or negotiation processes, their inclusion is often limited to traditional ‘youth issues’ such as education or employment.

Many scholars and activists have urged us to replace this simplified image of youth as victims or perpetrators with a more nuanced picture of the ways in which young people participate in, are affected by, and contribute to the resolution of conflicts. To do so, we must move away from treating youth as (yet another) homogeneous stakeholder category that needs to be represented at a negotiating table and start seeing it as the fluid, fuzzy concept that it is: a biological, psychological, sociological and economic construct of identity, which varies across countries, cultures and organisations and which brings a diverse range of experiences, grievances and aspirations to peace processes.

This quest for youth-sensitive pathways for peace has become one of the cornerstones of the international peacebuilding agenda in the past few years, as reflected in statements by inter-governmental agencies and in specific calls for the inclusion of youth in peace processes — most prominently UNSC Resolution 2250 on youth and security adopted in 2015. At the heart of these initiatives lies the desire to provide spaces for youth to interact and engage with other stakeholders in peace processes, to shape political change, and to question or eventually also transform existing power hierarchies.

Young peace protestors in Beirut, Lebanon.  
Photo: Frank Schultze/ Zeitemspiegel

Long before the adoption of UNSC Resolution 2250, the Berghof Foundation had started engaging young people — individuals, organisations and networks — and integrated their perspectives in its peace support, peace education and research work.

In the Abkhazia-Georgia-South Ossetia triad, the Berghof Foundation has been supporting young people to become dialogue facilitators and mediators in their respective communities, which has led to the establishment of an informal Young Facilitators Group that trains peers and engages in constructive intra- and intergenerational dialogue and confidence-building measures between and within their communities to foster empathy and overcome mistrust.

In Mindanao in the Philippines, the Berghof Foundation supported young female researchers, some of them former resistance fighters, to document stories about their experiences in the conflict, which they then shared and discussed in an intergenerational space in order to identify pathways for youth to take on leadership roles in the transition processes and the post-conflict society. In South Sudan, Berghof has supported inclusion of youth on various tracks of the peace process by facilitating discussions between youth representatives and local authorities (chiefs) from across South Sudan on issues of customary leadership and local governance, and the role chiefs and youth can play in promoting peace together. However, in order to use the full potential of young people as positive change agents in transforming conflicts, more efforts are required. In Afghanistan and Yemen, for example, over 60 per cent of the population is younger than 25. It is only with their energy and commitment and by taking into account their interests and vulnerabilities that we can arrive at genuinely inclusive peace processes and resilient post-conflict societies. The Berghof Foundation will thus continue to create opportunities for young people to share their experiences and bring in their views — from building capacities and raising awareness for peace through peace education to cooperating with youth-led partners, from training young people as dialogue facilitators to shaping the policy discourse in favour of increased youth inclusion in peace negotiations.



Interview

Sumayo  
Ibrahim  
Osman

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I decided  
that I should  
not allow  
the negative  
comments to  
discourage  
me.

Youth  
activist  
from  
Somalia





What is your background, and how did you end up doing peacebuilding work?

I have been a peacemaker for as long as I can remember: I am a person who resolves disputes between students, and I also come from a family well-known for peacemaking and development. It comes naturally to me. One day in 2018, when I was in form three [ninth grade] at school, I was invited to represent the Balad district youth association at a training event in Mogadishu, which was organised by the Berghof Foundation. I was the youngest of 16 participants from four districts in Hirshabelle region [a region near the capital Mogadishu]. Today I am a member of the Hirshabelle Insider Peacebuilders Network (IPN), which was established by the Berghof Foundation.

Can you tell us more about the project you were involved in with Berghof?

I participated in a conference organised by the Berghof Foundation in 2018, which was about community dialogue. My role was to help the trainers with the organisation of the conference. We aimed to provide the community with a platform to discuss important issues such as local conflicts and how to resolve them. Each conference is attended by about 50 people from all walks of life, including religious leaders, traditional elders, women, youth, businesspeople, academics and people with special needs. I was one of the co-facilitators.

What do you think was the most important achievement of the project/process you were working on with Berghof?

The establishment of the IPN, which will continue to work after the project is completed, has been a great success. It will raise awareness, provide training for the community and will continue to provide a space to have discussions on the various prospects for resolving local conflicts. All this can strengthen peaceful coexistence.

What was the greatest challenge or difficulty you encountered?

The biggest challenge I faced was that people saw me as a young girl, but when the debate took place, people understood that even though I was a girl and very young, I was a capable, eloquent person with a vision who could contribute to peace. I decided that I should not allow the negative comments to discourage me. Instead, I showed that I can contribute, and that the role of young people is needed. My brother has supported me in this.

Looking at the situation today, what do you personally take away from this work?

Today I have the skill to resolve conflicts. I meet young people who are active in peace and I find encouragement in them. Going forward, I plan to educate our society and organise awareness programmes on conflicts and how to achieve lasting peace.

What are your biggest hopes and fears for the peace process/transition in your country?

I am disappointed in the transition period as it does not appear that there will be fair elections in the country. If political issues are not agreed upon, it will have a negative impact on reconciliation at various levels, such as federal, state, district and village levels. Rigged elections and corruption can lead to more conflicts and wars.

What would you like people who don't know your context to understand?

Somalia is a beautiful country inhabited by peace-loving young people who have high hopes for their country.

## Applying our peace education approaches in other contexts

If you are looking for the address of Peace Education in Germany, you will come across the Georg Zundel House of the Berghof Foundation in Tübingen. Since 2002, this building has been the home of the former Institute of Peace Education, founded in 1976 as an association of peace activists, peace researchers, teachers and social workers. Under its roof, regular expert meetings and conferences have promoted and influenced Peace Education theory discourses and education practices in Germany. A wide range of publications and multimedia materials for researchers, teachers, social workers and the general public have been produced and countless school classes, student groups and others have come to the Georg Zundel House for interactive workshops, encounters and dialogues on peace, conflict, violence and war.

Since 2000, we have expanded our peace education work to a number of other countries around the globe. One programme that was particularly groundbreaking in this regard was ‘Peace Counts’, a multimedia exhibition we developed together with journalists about peacebuilders around the world to counter the overwhelming presence of war and violence in the media. The journalists’ reports portrayed inspiring people around the world and their efforts to reconcile, overcome hatred and initiate social change in conflict regions.

Our Peace Education team designed the exhibition, multimedia materials and accompanying education programmes for school classes in Germany. They trained university students to facilitate workshops where young people discussed the biographies of the portrayed peacebuilders and reflected on the values of peace, nonviolence and reconciliation and their own capabilities for change. After hundreds of school classes took part in the programme in Germany, the team took the exhibition to other countries where peacebuilders work with the aim of inspiring others. The travelling exhibition was first shown in Sri Lanka in 2007, followed by Macedonia, Côte d’Ivoire, Russia, Philippines, India and Colombia. In all cases, the exhibition project was carefully prepared and implemented together with local partners.

In selected countries, we offered more in-depth training and supported local partners to enable them to work independently with the exhibition, adapt or translate the materials and provide their own training and workshops. These ‘training for trainers’ events also included methodologies for peace education, integrating education about peace (peace as a topic), for peace (peace as the goal) and through peace (educating by peaceful means). Networks of trainers formed in Northeast India, in the South Caucasus and in Iran, often from different communities. They organised poster exhibitions and



Children from different communities in Kenya playing as a unified team.  
Photo: Frank Schultze / Peace Counts

facilitated their own workshops at universities and schools in a number of communities and remote rural areas, thus reaching out to thousands of people. In many countries, the Peace Counts exhibition project has been the starting point for deeper and longer-term collaborations on peace education. In order to make sustainable achievements, efforts for structural changes in the education system and its curricula are needed. In Northeast India, local universities have integrated the Peace Counts programme into their regular curricular or extracurricular activities. In Jordan, this project was an entry point for a seven-year programme of cooperation with education institutions on developing civic and nonviolent education in schools, universities and refugee camps. Storytelling approaches from the Peace Counts programme were then complemented by further methodologies such as street football for tolerance and interactive theatre. In Jordan, we developed a curriculum on civic and nonviolent education with university professors, deans and students all over the country in cooperation with the Ministry of Higher Education. Peer mediation was yet another approach that Jordanian teachers who had attended in our training course on this topic in Germany took up and implemented in their schools.

Having the Georg Zundel House as our 'home base' and being able to invite our partners

from abroad was key to the success of our work. From 2013 to 2017, it allowed us to bring together young people from our projects in India, Jordan, Iran, South Caucasus and other regions of the world at our annual Summer School for Young Peacebuilders to share their experiences, learn from each other, motivate one another and form a network of people working on peace education and related fields. The special atmosphere of the Georg Zundel House as a space of encounter and learning is something that all participants cherish and has led many of them to stay connected over the years.

Meanwhile, our development of sustainable structures for peace education within Germany continues. The Service Centre for Peace Education, established in 2015 by the Ministry of Education in Baden-Württemberg, the State Agency for Civic Education and the Berghof Foundation, has become a visible sign of institutionalisation of peace education and of cooperation between state institutions and civil society. The Service Centre offers teacher training, multimedia materials and workshops for schools and creates a network of model schools for peace education. They now work with an updated version of the Peace Counts exhibition produced in 2020. This interconnectedness of our local and global work has been a great source of mutual inspiration and our work and experience at home give us credibility vis-à-vis our partners in other countries.

# Voices of peace educators

Interview

Dr Hanan  
Madanat and  
Dr Leban Serto



Dr Hanan Madanat is Acting Dean of the Faculty of Languages and Communication at the American University of Madaba and partner in our project “Civic and Nonviolent Education in Jordan”

Why is peace education important?

**Dr Hanan Madanat:** If we want to change the world, we need to start with ourselves and make peace education a priority in our homes and in the educational institutions where our children and youth spend most of their time. Peace education helps young people increase their knowledge about peace, improve their skills in the area of peace, and form an attitude about the meaning of peace in human life. It can have a positive transformative power on students and children.

I experience this first-hand at the American University of Madaba, where I have seen peace education activities strengthen the students’ role as peacebuilders as it provides them with effective tools to resolve conflict through dialogue. It also promotes values of respect, tolerance and acceptance, and reduces prejudices and stereotypes. This is particularly relevant for us at the American University of Madaba with its student body representing around 28 nationalities. Through peace education workshops and training, students changed their conceptions of “self” and of “other” and have started to internalise a collective identity, which I believe to be one of the main reasons why our campus is free of violence.

Dr Leban Serto is a peace researcher and peace education activist in Northeast India. He was a partner in the Peace Counts exhibition (see page 102).

After ten years of working together, how has the collaboration with the Berghof Foundation influenced your peace education work?

**Dr Leban Serto:** I think two experiences stand out in particular. The first one was my participation at the Peace Counts training of trainers in Delhi in 2009, which brought together peacebuilders from Mumbai, Northeast India and Orissa. Working with stories from around the world in an experiential and didactic way brought freshness and vigour to our peace education movement in India and opened up new opportunities for our work. We returned home energised and immediately started reaching out to teachers and communities and created a network around the Peace Counts stories.

From 2013 to 2015 and with the support of the Berghof Foundation, we conducted 25 workshops in different territories and also across the border in Thailand and Myanmar. We also managed to establish a peace education course for MA students at the Martin Luther Christian University, where I teach, that includes material and methods from the Peace Counts project.

The second experience was my visit to Germany to the Berghof Foundation’s Georg Zundel House in 2011. During that visit, I learned more systematic ways of doing peace education and got to know a rich archive of multimedia materials, cartoons and CDs, which have greatly enriched my workshops. After the experience in Tübingen, I felt empowered and more confident when I reached out to people, especially community leaders, who are often critical at first. But when I ask them to narrate their own stories they open up.

At times this can be very emotional, when people connect their own life to the stories in the Peace Counts exhibition. I once had a participant who just stood there and looked at the pictures for a very long time with tears in his eyes. The stories really touch people.



## Learning spaces and material for young people

The increasing importance and constant expansion of the internet since the late 1990s have resulted in new, as yet almost untested digital approaches to teaching peace education. The peace educators at the Berghof Foundation recognised this potential as early as 2005 and initiated several digital projects. Having observed and experienced ourselves how children ask questions about war and peace, violence and conflict, we launched the online platform [frieden-fragen.de](http://frieden-fragen.de). This platform is still in existence, providing child-friendly answers to children's questions about how we live and interact together. All our answers are individual, reflect current academic thinking, and are based on values such as peace, human rights and non-violence. We use stories, maps, cartoons and videos, and enable children to reflect their personal views through quizzes. Parents, teachers and educators in childcare facilities can also find educational support on how to deal with children's questions, fears or media consumption. While the [frieden-fragen.de](http://frieden-fragen.de) website has become established over the years, digitalisation has progressed rapidly. It now permeates almost all spheres of society, and influences how we communicate with each other, consume news, argue, search for and access information, or find guidance. In addition to numerous advantages, this has brought new challenges for peaceful social relations.

Nowadays, the use of smartphones gives children and teenagers almost unlimited access to online platforms and thus to a flood of information, which has a significant effect on their identity formation. The unprecedented speed of communication, the dwindling role of journalists as gatekeepers and the interactivity of Web 2.0, where anyone and everyone can become a transmitter of information, all contribute to an unprecedented availability of information, some of which in turn fosters the spread of disinformation, propaganda and hate speech. As a consequence of these developments, we have seen increasing uncertainty among children and teenagers, especially with regard to current political events. Media coverage of war, terrorism, violence and oppression fuel fears, especially if the events are not contextualised.

For young people it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between rumours and facts in the media they consume online. Again and again, the questions we received via [frieden-fragen.de](http://frieden-fragen.de) referred to sites promoting disinformation, asking whether they were really telling the truth. Children and young people also come across alleged news in social networks and messaging services, such as the announcement of a third world war or the destruction of the world through nuclear weapons. This further reinforces fears and insecurities, which

extremists can then use for their own purposes. They reinforce polarisation, try to influence media agendas and can even encourage radicalisation.

This experience was also the impetus for our project Culture of Conflict 3.0 — Learning spaces and media for young people to deal with internet violence and hatred, which we implemented from 2017 until 2019. Now it was no longer just about conveying peace education content through digital learning media, but about specifically dealing with digital media themselves. The project thus aimed to raise young people's awareness of hate and disinformation online, to strengthen their critical media skills and to encourage them to stand up for peaceful social relations on the internet. This also involves experiencing the internet as a positive creative space.

The Culture of Conflict 3.0 app creates learning spaces for young people to share their experiences of discrimination, hate speech and digital violence. They are encouraged to become active themselves, or to use digital tools for their involvement. In view of the hatred, anti-democratic tone and violence in the digital landscape, it is important to work for peaceful social relations and to continue to build and strengthen a digital civil society. Against the background of rapidly spreading conspiracy theories — especially during the coronavirus pandemic — peace educators are now once again faced with the challenge of facilitating innovative, target group-specific approaches to these topics.

Based on the experience gained with our project Culture of Conflict 3.0 and the response to the diverse needs in dealing with digital anti-democratic trends in academic and non-academic education, we have developed the pilot project #vrschwrrng (conspiracy) — an interactive toolkit against conspiracy theories. Through a dialogue-oriented, participatory process, which will last from 2020 to 2024, we will develop educational material together with young people with the aim of strengthening their knowledge and critical skills in dealing with conspiracy theories. This free interactive toolkit will be published on the platform vrschwrrng.de in 2021.





Looking  
ahead



Throughout our history, we have been guided in our work by the challenges and opportunities of the historical context. As we are entering our sixth decade as an organisation, the world is once again undergoing tremendous change.



In this last chapter, we want to look ahead and present some of our new focal areas that we hold to be key issues of the current global context.



## Climate-proofing conflict transformation

There is hardly any aspect of life that is not affected by climate change. At the Berghof Foundation, we see that climate change impacts exacerbate existing conflicts or even create new ones — especially where resources such as water and arable land are becoming increasingly scarce. We also realise that a present-day solution to a conflict may quickly be undermined by climate change impacts still to come, such as increasing drought and desertification, shifting shorelines of lakes and rivers that define disputed borders, extreme weather events, and other forms of environmental degradation.

But climate change can also offer the opportunity for peaceful conflict transformation, by using common concerns about climate change impacts as an entry point for bringing conflict parties to the negotiating table through environmental peacebuilding.

Peacebuilding organisations such as the Berghof Foundation need to adapt the way they work to rise to these challenges, not least because many of the countries in which we are active (Afghanistan, Ethiopia, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Yemen, etc.) are situated in the worst-affected regions of the world. As a first step, we have started to build our own expertise in the field to be able to systematically include climate change impacts in our conflict analyses and identify environmental impacts on conflict early on in our engagement. This reflects Dieter Senghaas's recommendation (see page 36) that in its work, the Berghof Foundation should build on its tradition of establishing bridges between social and natural sciences.

However, rather than becoming climate scientists ourselves, we are building networks and reaching out to research institutions that focus on climate change. Forging new partnerships will not only give us access to the most recent knowledge and data for our analysis, but will also help develop important synergies to contribute to a collective understanding of the conflict-climate change nexus. Such partnerships will include the wider climate change community and raise awareness of how mitigation and adaptation projects may spark or deepen social conflict.

In our core field of supporting communities in transforming conflict, the Berghof approach has always been to avoid quick fixes and systematically address the root causes of conflict. With the challenges of climate change, we will need to strengthen this long-term perspective even further and develop methodologies to ‘climate-proof’ peace agreements.

First and foremost, this includes raising awareness among political leaders, influential individuals, insider mediators and negotiation teams about the long-term impacts of climate change in their regions. What type of impacts can we expect in the next five, 10 or 20 years — and is there a risk they might derail a negotiated peace agreement? Could climate change lead to uneven economic development and rekindle conflict between former foes?

Once conflict parties and facilitators alike see the need to think beyond the present day in regard to climate change impacts, the next major challenge will be to develop and strengthen security mechanisms, resource management systems and political institutions in protecting the parties’ commitment to peace against the impacts of climate change and thus help avoid a relapse into violent conflict.

Climate change adaptation measures benefiting all parties to a conflict may not only be important to protect existing or newly signed agreements — they could even serve as confidence-building measures in the early stages of the conflict transformation process. Such projects could provide short-term benefits for communities on all sides, thus strengthening the legitimacy of leaders — while demonstrating that cooperation can lead to win-win situations, not only on environmental issues.

Approaches such as global learning and peace education can play a role too by contributing to our understanding of climate change and building individual capacities to transform climate conflicts in a non-violent way — on a personal, societal and international level.

At Berghof, we want to help build networks capable of generating the necessary synergies to address these challenges. We have reached out to partners to explore opportunities for closer cooperation and, in this 50th anniversary year, are launching the first pilot projects around the climate-conflict nexus. Through our dialogue project in Somalia, for example, we are increasing awareness of the climate crisis and supporting the development of ideas on how to address and reduce the impact of climate change on conflicts both at the community and the national level (see page 48). There is no doubt that environmental degradation and other consequences of anthropogenic climate change will play a much larger role in almost all aspects of Berghof’s work in the years to come.

# Digital pathways for peace

Twitter, Instagram and other social media channels are important tools for activists to raise awareness of human rights violations and social injustices. When in 2020 the footage capturing the murder of George Floyd spread via social media, activists quickly joined calls for demonstrations that revived the #BlackLivesMatter movement at unprecedented scale and speed. Practically all protest movements in recent years have been fuelled and transformed through the use of social media; notable examples are the Gezi park protest in Turkey, the Arab uprisings, the #EndSARS protests in Nigeria and the 2019-20 Hong Kong protests.

However, at the same time, we are witnessing how digital technologies and artificial intelligence are fundamentally reshaping the nature of armed conflict and present a set of new challenges to human rights: fully autonomous weapon systems with limited accountability and proportionality can reduce the possibility of military casualties and lower the threshold of war. Authoritarian governments increasingly use digital surveillance to control and repress restive populations and inconvenient civil society actors, while political arsonists exploit social media to fuel hatred, manipulate public opinion and exacerbate social polarisation. Democratic governments and social media platforms are often ill-prepared to do much about it.

As peacebuilders, we cannot afford to disregard ongoing developments in digital technology and artificial intelligence. We need to engage with them proactively, ethically and

transparently while constantly reflecting on possible negative consequences. If we fail to do so, we leave this field to those who see new technologies as an opportunity to control, manipulate and repress populations, to gain political influence, and to conduct warfare by ever more heinous means.

At Berghof, we have been combining peacebuilding and digitalisation for a number of years in Germany. Our digital peace education projects [www.friedenfragen.de](http://www.friedenfragen.de), *Streitkultur 2.0* and *#vrschwrg*, which are presented in detail in this publication (see page 106), have spearheaded our exploration of digital peacebuilding. Recently, we have expanded our engagement in this field to other contexts. In Lebanon, we are supporting an inclusive group of social media influencers from various communities and confessional groups in their efforts to de-escalate tensions, advocate for inclusive citizenship concepts and uphold a constructive forward-looking dialogue on key national priorities.

When violence erupted in Lebanon in 2019 and 2020 and polarised messages went viral on social media, this group of influencers was able to use its prominent status and wide reach to confront sectarian messaging and incite narratives with alternative messages that promote non-exclusionary identity concepts and shared values of citizenship and empathy. Based on these promising experiences, we intend to further develop and deepen our engagement with digital conflict transformation both geographically and thematically.

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Digital tools and in particular social media will make it possible to create wider inclusivity and integrate a broad variety of perspectives, interests and needs into a negotiation process. They enable peacebuilders to assess the views and opinions of the wider population, and inform and educate the public and organised actors about the negotiations, the agreement and its implementation. This will ultimately increase the legitimacy and ownership of the peace process.

Addressing the  
long legacy of  
violent pasts

History  
memory  
reconciliation





One might venture to say that no German organisation with a mission to build peace and transform conflict can do so without a firm rooting in lessons on how to rebuild from a violent past. When the Berghof Foundation was established in 1971, it was in part a response to knowing about the devastation that war brings, and the ensuing responsibility to find better, nonviolent ways. In his memoirs, the Berghof Foundation's founder Georg Zundel writes: "The violent confrontation of the Second World War, which took place during my childhood and youth, had a decisive impact on me. It resulted in my resistance to rearmament, my involvement in the anti-nuclear movement and finally the establishment of the Berghof Foundation for Conflict Research. [...] Our youth today lacks such experiences. It therefore seems to me to be of the utmost importance to raise awareness of the conflicts smoldering in society and to work out strategies that will make it possible to resolve these conflicts peacefully."

It is practically in the Berghof Foundation's DNA to engage conceptually and practically with the role of the past in conflict transformation, even if it has not always dominated the topical headlines of our work over the decades. In recent years, from peace education to peace mediation, it is becoming apparent just how essential it is to understand the history of past violence and its representation in the present in order to peacefully transform conflict. Writing in 2021, dealing with the past, reconciliation and, indeed, transitional justice are all highly differentiated fields of expertise. At their core, however, the transformational challenge is the same for all: how to rebuild relationships, and trust, between individuals, between communities, and between citizens and their state(s). The remainder of this short essay therefore highlights some of the key encounters — the memory of three lasting relationships — that have affected, and continue to inspire, our approach.

From 2005 to 2008, the then Berghof Research Center Director David Bloomfield — from Belfast, Northern Ireland — shaped a commitment to practicality, pragmatism and critical distinction. His seminal report *On Good Terms* in 2006 talks about 'political reconciliation': "This does not require

forgiveness or mutual love. It begins as grudging coexistence and, by gradually nurturing basic respect both for new institutions and for former enemies, aims to develop the habits of operating the shared processes and institutions of society and of politics." This chimes today, for example, with our work in Somalia on reconciliation dialogues.

In 2007/2008, Israeli Professor Dan Bar-On spent time as a guest researcher at the Berghof Research Center, and instilled the importance of clear questioning, engagement within each side in conflict and the painstaking work of trust and confidence-building. Berghof Handbook Dialogue 11 on transforming war-related identities is dedicated to his memory. The history textbook of Israeli and Palestinian parallel memories, *Side by Side* — a prime example of peace education, which a team at Berghof translated into a German workbook — exemplifies the complexity of historical memories and their interface with education and peacebuilding. His work resonates to this day in our approach to biographical storytelling and history dialogues in the Caucasus.

A final relationship serves to underscore the transformative potential of being moved by remarkable stories and people. In 2006, Jo Berry and Patrick Magee visited the Berghof Center, then located in the quaint green surroundings of Berlin's Dahlem district. Pat Magee, an IRA member, had planted the bomb in the Grand Hotel in Brighton that killed Jo's father, a British Conservative MP, in 1984. They have opened their encounters and dialogues of forgiveness to the public, and back then, a Berghof audience witnessed the remarkable force of reconciliation in the making: an uneasy, fragile and powerful example of peer learning.

In the decade beginning in 2021, *Dealing with the Past* explicitly makes it to the forefront of our strategic agenda of practice, education and research. Whether in Georgia-Abkhazia, Ethiopia, Somalia, Germany or other settings, our work on dealing with the past emphasises community perspectives on justice and reconciliation after violence, recognising the empathy and strength as well as the pragmatism and humility required. We take a keen interest in history dialogues and the role of history narratives, divisive or uniting, in mediation and dialogue at the political level.

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## Peaceful protest movements

### Key drivers of conflict transformation

As witnessed across Latin America, in the Middle East, Asia and Europe during the last two years, there is a global resurgence of nonviolent movements taking to the streets to protest against autocratic or unaccountable governments. ‘People power’ campaigns for human rights, good governance and social justice are often catalysts for peace processes and democratic change. Research has shown that political transitions initiated by bottom-up nonviolent protest movements are more lasting, more peaceful and more democratic than other forms of transition. Starting from these findings and complementing Berghof’s longstanding work on all levels of conflict transformation including grassroots movements, we study and constructively engage with social movements that pursue nonviolent protest strategies — such as demonstrations, strikes, boycotts or more symbolic forms of resistance — as an alternative to violent resistance or extremism.

We understand civil resistance and peacebuilding strategies to be complementary facets of conflict transformation. Protest movements prioritise justice through the empowerment of marginalised groups, while peacebuilders prioritise peace by generating mutually acceptable solutions, with the use of dialogue, negotiation or reconciliation. When conducted successfully, peaceful protests can serve as effective violence prevention mechanisms; as pre-negotiation tools pressuring power-holders to engage in inclusive dialogue; and as accountability instruments in the wake of peace accords and democratic transitions, by mobilising to oppose autocratic backlash or to demand full implementation of progressive state reform. These insights underline the importance of understanding peaceful protest movements in the context of conflict transformation work.

## Working with protest movements

### Practical challenges

Often, protest movements fail to meet their ambitious aspirations. Prominent cases such as the Arab Spring revolutions in Egypt and Syria and the 2014 Euromaidan revolution in Ukraine show that bottom-up peaceful transitions can lose momentum and ultimately result in a return to authoritarianism or even outbreaks of civil war, due to a severely repressive state forcing protesters to leave the country or imprisoning them, as well as diffuse protest leadership allowing sections of a movement to change tactics and resort to polarisation or violence.

Another challenge for nonviolent movements is their marginalisation during formal negotiations or political transitions, leading to their exclusion from power or their co-optation by former political allies. In a number of recent or ongoing pro-democracy campaigns — e.g. in Sudan, Algeria and Lebanon — protest movements have been very good at mobilising large social constituencies, but encounter serious limitations when it comes to engaging effectively in inter-party dialogue or reform processes.

There are multiple factors contributing to this gap, including movements’ lack of strategic planning and readiness for inter-party dialogue. Protesters might be sceptical about negotiations and adopt uncompromising positions towards their opponents. Moreover, movements are often structured as heterogeneous coalitions that unite around demands for change, but lack a unified vision of what comes next. On the side of power-holders, governments may refuse to hold dialogues or may impose restrictions on who can represent movements. International peacebuilding agencies and mediators also often lack understanding of grassroots movements and fail to engage them proactively, preferring to work with the formal political opposition or selected civil society leaders.

# Outlook

## How to include protest movements in peace and transition processes?

Over the next three years, Berghof will use its experience in participatory research, capacity-building and dialogue facilitation to analyse and engage with protest movements as key drivers of conflict transformation. We will also foster multi-level communication channels with grassroots civil society that reach well beyond urban elites and professional NGOs. Where we have ongoing activities and trusted partners, we will engage with a broad range of movements advancing complementary facets of sustainable peace, including pro-democracy, human rights, environmental, social justice and anti-corruption movements. Particular emphasis will be placed on women and youth at the forefront of nonviolent mobilisations.

An example of this has already been implemented in Lebanon, a country rocked by mass protests and street demonstrations since October 2019, within the context of two ongoing dialogue processes organised by Berghof: one with an inclusive group of social media influencers, the other supporting dialogue among female leaders in emerging political movements as well as in traditional political parties (in separate dialogue tracks). Further planning is under way on strategy-building with emerging political movements, to support them in their efforts to develop constructive visions for the country.

Our aim is to foster a conducive environment for the effective inclusion of protest movements in national dialogues, peace processes and political settlements. We aim to build their capacity to conduct inclusive negotiations, either internally, with civil society and political allies, or across the conflict divide. This work will contribute to the broader goal of preventing violent conflict and building sustainable peace, by providing grassroots activists with the tools to meaningfully influence state reforms and public policies.





# Integrating anti-corruption approaches into conflict transformation

Corruption is present in almost all fragile contexts, and not coincidentally: corruption helps perpetuate exclusionary political settlements that cause conflict, and undermines state authority, capacity and legitimacy. It is increasingly clear that corruption intersects with violent conflict and fragility in a self-perpetuating vicious circle: corruption exacerbates the risk of conflict, and conflict and the associated opportunities for state capture and profiteering exacerbate corruption. Conversely, there is growing evidence that lower levels of corruption help to achieve durable peace.

Despite this growing recognition of the relevance of corruption from a peace perspective, actors involved in peace processes have been reluctant to engage with the issue. There are concerns that addressing corruption would undermine delicate relations with key conflict stakeholders, many of whom are direct beneficiaries of war economies. Moreover, the potential for conflict parties to weaponise accusations of corruption against their enemies poses risks for mediators whose access depends on being perceived as impartial.

At the same time, the anti-corruption community has been reluctant to seriously think through how anti-corruption measures can contribute to — or undermine — peace processes or how insensitively applied anti-corruption measures might destabilise fragile post-conflict contexts. Anti-corruption programming often focuses on technical and institution-based approaches that do not sufficiently consider the systems of power in which these institutions are embedded. As a result, current good governance and anti-corruption programming risks doing harm in fragile contexts and during peace and subsequent transition processes.

We believe that anti-corruption efforts, especially in conflict contexts, need to be not just conflict-sensitive, but attuned to the needs of peace. Anti-corruption actors must do more to ensure that their programming supports, rather than hinders, successful transitions out of violent conflict. Equally, we recognise the key role corruption and war economies play in perpetuating violence and believe that actors supporting peace processes and subsequent reconstruction efforts need to draw stronger conclusions from this recognition.

We must proactively put the issue of corruption on the agenda of peace and transition processes — and do so in ways that do not undermine fragile political settlements. Doing so is in the interests of all actors working at the triple nexus of humanitarian, development and peace programming. The improved integration of anti-corruption efforts into peace processes will

contribute to putting reconstruction and transition efforts on a firmer footing by tackling systemic corruption and would help development actors avoid doing harm in fragile post-conflict contexts.

Berghof has therefore committed to work on the issue of anti-corruption in peace processes in its current strategic plan. As a first step to contribute to integrating anti-corruption measures in peace process support, we will undertake a mapping study to explore how anti-corruption approaches can be better integrated into, and contribute to, peace processes and subsequent transitions. Through the mapping, we will develop actionable, inclusive process design tools for engaging relevant actors on anti-corruption in peace processes with a view to long-term, systemic transformation.

In the longer term, we see ourselves as well-positioned to bring together mediation, peacebuilding and anti-corruption actors and approaches and to facilitate a multi-stakeholder dialogue between the anti-corruption communities, actors involved in peace processes and relevant government ministries. We will also integrate peace-sensitive anti-corruption approaches into our ongoing support to peace processes and war-to-peace transitions.

# Making the invisible count

## Gender and diversity as a focal area for Berghof Foundation

The gendered dynamics underpinning cultures, institutions and social norms are inherently tied to power relations and control over who can access public services, participate politically, or influence decisions. To address these dynamics in our work, we need to understand intersecting life realities and how we can apply context-appropriate and context-sensitive tools of analysis.

It is well-established in the peacebuilding field that peace processes and peace agreements in which women and LGBTQI\* people play a strong role are more sustainable. Aside from this argument, which focuses on efficiency and sustainability, there is obviously a clear ethical aspect to making sure that women and LGBTQI\* communities are included in peace processes, and that their needs are taken up and reflected. Often, women and other marginalised groups are most vulnerable in conflict contexts. Not only are they affected by direct sexual and gender-based violence, but they are also subject to extortion and particularly vulnerable when they have to relocate, while living in refugee accommodations, or when resettling in a new context.

At the same time, they are actors in their respective societies with political visions and direct involvement in conflict, peace and transition processes. Adding a gender- and LGBTQI\*-sensitive lens to working on peace settlements, transition periods or in post-conflict settings is therefore a necessary practice that will be increasingly mainstreamed throughout the work of the Berghof Foundation in the coming years. Peace negotiations and settlements also offer unique opportunities to enshrine rights and protections for women and marginalised groups in new constitutional and legal frameworks.

Colombia offers a recent example: progressive legislation on women's and LGBTQI\* people's rights was included in a proposed peace agreement after extensive consultations.

Despite some advances, implementation of the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda based on UN Resolution 1325 remains a work in progress, and its binary understanding of gender tends to obscure the situations and concerns of LGBTQI\* communities. Gender- and LGBTQI\*-sensitive analysis, planning and implementation are still too often done superficially in operational peacebuilding practice, albeit increasingly supported by a strong alliance of donors in our field.

We will build on our participatory research and practical engagement of previous years with women in conflict parties, and going forward, we plan to engage with other facets of gender dynamics based on an inclusive, intersectional understanding. We will further expand our work with women in resistance and liberation movements to support their leadership roles during peace processes and post-war transitions. In addition, we will continue our engagement with partners on a gendered approach to mediation that includes women on the frontlines of global protest movements acting as insider mediators, as well as mainstreaming a gender and diversity lens in our publications, programme and policy-relevant outputs. To kick this off, we collaborate with partners on an initiative that links the WPS agenda with LGBTQI\* perspectives in the peacebuilding field more explicitly.

We will also critically reflect on core concepts in peacebuilding from a gender and LGBTQI\*-sensitive perspective. In the past

decade, emerging research from the critical International Relations field questioned notions such as state sovereignty and territoriality as deeply exclusionary and rooted in gendered power-dynamics. They are tied to patriarchal, male and Western perspectives on how nationality is passed down, and many modern migration laws rest on heteronormative assumptions of a core family that inform who is allowed to migrate. Challenging these concepts by using critical approaches can open up new perspectives on the establishment of borders, migration regimes and peace between territorial states. From a critical, queer perspective, for instance, the ‘territorial peace’ — the idea that states with clearly delineated borders are more likely to be at peace with each other — looks more violent than from a conventional point of view because it rests on inherently normative and repressive ideas. The way they remain defined today, many concepts of borders and nationalities deny certain communities the privilege of citizenship, or prevent them from passing it on to their children, hence marginalising and rendering them invisible.

Applying a gender and LGBTQI\*-sensitive lens will lead us to ask different questions and to discover factors that uphold such concepts and that have previously remained imperceptible. Additionally, critical approaches based on queer theory and intersectional approaches allow for the inclusion of LGBTQI\* and marginalised perspectives in peacebuilding work, something that is rendered invisible even in the most commonly used feminist methodologies.

## Acknowledgements

This book provides an insight into the work of the Berghof Foundation over the past 50 years. We also introduce you to some of our colleagues and partners and their individual stories. While only a small selection, they represent the talent, passion, and determination of our entire staff and all our partners. Without them, Berghof would not have been able to achieve the impact we present in this book — nor would we have been able to publish it. Like all of our work, this book is a collaborative effort and could only be realised thanks to the many contributions of our staff and partners who wrote texts, contributed pictures, and provided stories and interviews. The result is a testimony of our work that spans over 50 years and 130 pages. We hope it encourages our staff and partners, both current and future, to continue to add to our achievements and to continue to work towards our vision of a world in which people engage with each other constructively, and together seek inclusive and peaceful ways to address the grievances and issues that divide them.

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