



Why Civil Society and Conflict Resolution?

Roundtable Meeting, Istanbul

6 April 2013





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Foreword

This report details the discussion that took place during the Democratic Progress Institute and Berghof Foundation's roundtable meeting in Istanbul, Turkey on 6th April 2013, regarding the role that civil society can play in conflict resolution. As developments continue to move forward at a fast pace in Turkey, civil society is uniquely positioned to be an active participant in the ongoing peace process. Although faced with challenges, we hope that this record of the discussions that took place will provide a step towards identifying opportunities for Turkish civil society to support the current developments and contribute to sustainable conflict resolution. This jointly hosted roundtable discussion is one of a series of Turkey seminars and is something DPI very much hopes to continue in partnership with the Berghof Foundation. Many thanks to everyone who participated and made this dialogue so spirited and thought provoking.

DPI aims to foster an environment in which different parties share information, ideas, knowledge and concerns connected to the development of democratic solutions and outcomes. Our work supports the development of a pluralistic political arena capable of generating consensus and ownership over work on key issues surrounding democratic solutions at political and local levels.

We focus on providing expertise and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvements in promoting

peace and democracy building internationally. Within this context DPI aims to contribute to the establishment of a structured public dialogue on peace and democratic advancement, as well as to create new and widen existing platforms for discussions on peace and democracy building. In order to achieve this we seek to encourage an environment of inclusive, frank, structured discussions whereby different parties are in the position to openly share knowledge, concerns and suggestions for democracy building and strengthening across multiple levels. DPIs objective throughout this process is to identify common priorities and develop innovative approaches to participate in and influence the process of finding democratic solutions. DPI also aims to support and strengthen collaboration between academics, civil society and policy-makers through its projects and output. Comparative studies of relevant situations are seen as an effective tool for ensuring that the mistakes of others are not repeated or perpetuated. Therefore we see comparative analysis of models of peace and democracy building to be central to the achievement of our aims and objectives.

The Berghof Foundation works with like-minded partners in selected regions to enable conflict stakeholders and actors to develop non-violent responses in the face of conflict-related challenges. In doing so, we rely on the knowledge, skills and resources available in the areas of conflict research, peace support and peace education. By combining our regional experience with a thematic focus on cutting-edge issues we aim to be a learning organisation capable of supporting sustained efforts for conflict transformation.

The Foundation believes in having local needs and requests guide its engagement in selected regions. Receptive to all parties' interests, we want to create the conditions for conflict stakeholders and actors to safely and constructively engage with each other. In this, we offer our knowledge, skills and resources to build individual and institutional capacities. The Berghof Foundation believes that sustained transformation of violent conflicts means addressing systemic root causes, as well as “proxy” causes that emerge from the experience of war. Deconstructing social and political violence depends upon changing stereotyped mind sets, attitudes and behaviours. Providing effective support towards this end requires long-term commitment, as well as persistence despite repeated stalemates, backlashes and moments of reescalation. Conflict transformation is a learning process, but it is also learning by doing. We see ourselves as a learning organisation, providing a collaborative space for experts and partners to reflect and learn with and from each other.

This report was prepared with the kind assistance of Katharine Cornish.

Kerim Yildiz

Director

Democratic Progress Institute

April 2013

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April 2013

Roundtable: Why Civil Society and Conflict Resolution? Istanbul, Turkey 6th April 2013



*Participants in the roundtable meeting at The Point Hotel, Istanbul:
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Ayşegül Doğan, Catriona Vine, Kadri Salaz, İrfan Aktan,
Avila Kilmurray, Ahmet Akgül, Nuşirevan Elçi, Etyen Mahçupyan,
Gönül Karahanoğlu, Bejan Matur, Ayşe Betül Çelik, Tahir Elçi, Mehmet Alpcan,
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Welcome and Introduction

Opening Remarks - Catriona Vine¹

Good morning to you all and many thanks on behalf of the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) for attending today. This roundtable has been organised by the Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation jointly. There is some information in the packs that you have about both organisations, and of course if you have any questions throughout the day, myself and Hans-Joachim Giessmann will be happy to answer questions about our work.

Civil society actors have a crucial role to play in helping to initiate, promote, and strengthen dialogue which is objective and comprehensive, and this is recognised by the creation of the group of wise persons recently here in Turkey. We have some of them here with us today. They have been charged with initiating discussion and debate throughout Turkey about the resolution of the conflict, and hopefully we will be able to have some useful discussion here.

The Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation wish to support Turkish civil society and the government in fulfilling this initiative. It is important in that aim, that the work is structured. Today our speakers will share their experiences about

¹ Catriona Vine is the Deputy Director and Director of Programmes at the Democratic Progress Institute. She has practiced criminal, public and human rights law in the UK and internationally, and has extensive experience working with governmental, inter-governmental, and non-governmental organizations.

how that might happen. We have provided a paper in your packs; which is also available on the DPI website about the role of civil society in conflict resolution. If you are interested, there are many resources on the websites of both of the two organisations, which are very relevant to today's topic.

Our speakers today will share many examples of the ways in which civil society has played a positive role in resolving conflict. You have the programme for today, as well as the biographies of the various speakers and chairpersons. I will now pass over to Ali Bayramoğlu who is going to introduce today's meeting.



*Catriona Vine, Deputy Director and Director of Programs,
Democratic Progress Institute*

Introduction - Ali Bayramođlu²

Thank you to the Institute and the Berghof Foundation for inviting me today and for hosting what I hope will be a very valuable meeting. Because of the Kurdish conflict, at present, Turkey is considered a global 'hot spot'. The definition of a 'hot spot' might be different depending on the government, but we have known and lived and experienced what it means for the last 30 years. We live in an environment filled with tension, including social and political tension. Instead of waiting for the social and political environment to change, we should do something to resolve the conflict.



Ali Bayramođlu

² Ali Bayramođlu is a writer and political commentator. He is a columnist with the daily newspaper *Yeni Safak* and a presenter with Turkey's '24 TV' television channel. Mr. Bayramođlu is widely published in the area of social and political analysis.

The negotiations between the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) and the government have opened a new chapter to all of us and this window has created a new period for all actors and stakeholders in Turkey. I think this session will give us many concrete examples to learn from, such as South Africa. The problem is not only about ending the conflict or about having a consensus regarding the resolution of the conflict, but it is also about providing sustainable peace. When we talk about 'providing the means for peace', we are also referring to a change in the mentalities of citizens of these countries. People need to be open to change, and change must occur in their mentalities and mind-sets.

In terms of the plan that we have today, we first require a ceasefire so that we are able to hear the voices of those who can help to end the conflict. We expect that there will be changes in the structure of Turkish society, the military structure, and the political structure. The issue may be about the constitution, and how it can support these different societies to live together. There is also the Kurdish proposal regarding autonomous governance, and the question of how to find a solution to that. We will be faced with all of these issues in the coming days.

We probably agree that there are two actors involved, but there are many levels of society that are affected by these issues and should participate in finding solutions. It cannot just be two people finding a solution to this problem. We need change in all levels of society. People must learn to share the social space with others and by doing

so, change their mind-sets and mentalities. Inevitably the problem is social legitimacy. As I have told you, it is not only the acts and movements of political actors. There needs to be a legitimate, social environment which guides this situation and process.

When we talk about this issue, we remember that non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) are at the centre. The Prime Minister recently called a meeting of the wise people. Before that meeting, the participants probably thought that it would be about democracy and peace, as well as how to enable the active participation of civil society.

From that perspective, I believe today's meeting has two considerations. The first consideration refers to the uniqueness of Turkey. As you know, each country has its own unique features. We should know the characteristics of a country before we try to find a solution for that country. But on the other hand, a country is a country and democracy is democracy and because of that, there are some universal rules that can be applied. We should consider what kind of common solutions exist for these universal problems instead of trying only to create our own. There are some countries that have gone through this phase before, so it is important to learn from the experiences of those countries. When we think about the discussions and debates going on all around the country, we should not forget about these universal rules. Instead we need to combine the universal rules with the local culture here.

Today civil society has a role of being a mediator in the conflict, which is an important role for civil society. I would like to give the floor to our distinguished speakers. The moderator will be Cengiz Aktar, but first I would like to give the floor to Mr Hans-Joachim Giessmann from the Berghof Foundation in Germany. He will make an opening speech and then Cengiz Aktar will open the session.

Introduction - Hans-Joachim Giessmann³

Thank you very much for both introductions and for inviting me here today. It is a fascinating moment for Turkey but also for Europe. Being here as part of this joint endeavour with DPI, is a wonderful task and challenge for the Berghof Foundation. You may be familiar with the work that we are doing whereby we are providing expertise and skills in conflict research, practical support, and peace education aimed at conflict transformation. For the Foundation, this means bringing actors together so that they can then take the initiative to build solutions suited to their country and the conditions within which their society exists.

Having said that, this is a fascinating moment but it is also a vulnerable moment. When processes start, they are vulnerable to several potential threats and challenges. But that is part of

³ Hans-Joachim Giessmann is the Executive Director of the Berghof Foundation and currently also Director of its conflict research department. Formerly, he was Deputy Director of the Institute for Peace Research and Security Policy at the University of Hamburg. Mr. Giessmann chairs the Global Agenda Council on Terrorism at the World Economic Forum.

peacebuilding processes in general, and I think discussing the details of this process and exploring the possible roles civil society can play with this type of audience is an important endeavour.

Why is civil society so important? In most cases, the public is captivated by track one negotiations, which tend to underestimate the huge potential civil society actors have to provide legitimacy to peacebuilding and conflict transformation efforts, as well as to contribute in an operational sense. As was said before, there are many roles that civil society can play, including mediator roles. The peace process cannot be sustainable without civil society being involved. If the outcomes of track one are not reflected within society at large, then there can be no peace in the long run.

There is often a discussion as to what civil society is about. Of course civil society has many facets and faces. While some consider this a weakness, I consider it a strength. The multiple faces of civil society help it to reach across all political camps, allowing it to open discussions about peace and conflict transformation to the whole society.

I hope for an interesting and fascinating meeting today and I wish all of us inspiration and wonderful discussion.



Hans-Joachim Giessmann, Executive Director, Berghof Foundation

Session One:

Moderator – Cengiz Aktar⁴

I would like to thank the Institute and the Berghof Foundation for organising this session and inviting me here today. We have learned that Hans-Joachim Giessmann has come to Turkey for the first time, which is a very important time in the history of Turkey. We are stepping into a new world, which is all about conflict resolution. Ten years ago, a person arranged a similar meeting and people were surprised by its purpose. We knew about conflict and how to fight wars, but now we are learning how to solve problems and negotiate after conflict.

⁴ Cengiz Aktar is a faculty member at the Bahcesehir University. He served as the second president of the Inter-governmental Advisory Board of the European Union on migration and asylum policy issues. He is a writer and an academic, and has published books and articles on the process of Turkey's integration in the European Union. Currently he is a columnist at Taraf daily newspaper.

In Turkey, we lack expert and institutional capacity for conflict resolution. Let me give you an example, there are 160 universities in Turkey, but only three universities offer a course in conflict resolution. One of them is the University of Sabancı, where Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik works as an academic. These are the only universities where you can study conflict resolution. For the first time, we are able to coordinate these types of meetings in Turkey. Previously, we could not have held them within the borders of Turkey; we would have held them outside of Turkey. Now we are able to discuss these issues inside our own country.

We read about these issues in the newspapers and learn about it through television. There is a new book coming out about civil society and conflict resolution, and the author recently published a book on conflict resolution. There are many things going on in Turkey and we must learn by doing. But we must be careful; we cannot make any mistakes because this is a very sensitive period for Turkey. We have to be as logical as possible.

The first speaker this morning will be Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik. She has been working on this issue for many years and has a truly unique personality. Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik has been in this business for many years. She has three books. In 2005, she published a book on social trauma and displacement. She has also written about the reconstruction of displacement camps, and in 2007, published a book on the role of civil society and conflict resolution related to the Kurdish issue.



Moderator Cengiz Aktar

Speaker - Ayşe Betül Çelik⁵

I would like to thank DPI for inviting me to this valuable roundtable meeting and Mr Cengiz Aktar for introducing me. Let me tell something obvious, and it will relate to what our distinguished speakers have mentioned already. The Kurdish problem cannot be solved only through negotiations or constitutional changes because there are many levels to this problem. There are serious security, social, and political problems resulting from the war. We are trying to solve the economic problems and the political problems, but for a sustainable peace, I think there is an issue that is more important, which is the contact between the Turkish and Kurdish sides.

⁵ Ayşe Betül Çelik is an Associate Professor at Sabanci University, where she teaches political science and conflict resolution. She is an expert on inter-ethnic conflict resolution, reconciliation and dialogue. She has published several articles and edited a book on Turkey's Kurdish Question, forced Kurdish migration and the role of NGOs in conflict. She also teaches gender awareness to high school students.

There is a lack of trust between the two parties, and we need to address this. There is also distrust amongst the NGOs working on this issue, and between governmental institutions. Governmental polarisation of public institutions is another problem. I will touch on all of these issues.

In 2010, we published a study carried out in 13 countries. Firstly, we scanned the literature to find out about civil society and conflict resolution. Then, we wanted to understand what NGOs do in what fields, and after, bring in conflict resolution. We also analysed the phases of conflict, and NGO's perceptions of conflict. The first role we discussed with NGOs was the protection of civilians from threats and violence. We asked NGOs about the duty of protection. After, we examined the role of surveillance. Other roles we looked at included defending peace and human rights, and creating contact between groups. As we know, there are marginalised groups. Civil society has a responsibility to teach them about developing individual identities, and about democracy and peace.

Contact amongst groups is highly important. You can also call it 'living together'. This is a process whereby conflicting groups come together and socialise and try to learn about each other and understand each other. In my study, I analysed the Kurdish issue and I wanted to learn about the role of NGOs within the Kurdish issue. When we think about the general nature of the problem, all functions are important and should be part of the solution to the problem. Our conclusion was that socialising, intergroup mediation,

and establishing good relations between parties are amongst the most important things, but because of historical reasons, NGOs have not always carried out these activities in Turkey.

I think that there is a problem with the relationship between the government and NGOs, and I think that is why NGOs have been less effective. Turkey's civil society is not that strong compared to that of other countries. When we talk about a strong state, the government is not facilitating NGO participation; instead they are limiting NGO influence in Turkey. In Turkey, the NGOs can only do the work that the government has permitted them to do. Here the state draws the limits. We understand that service delivery has been the only area in which NGOs have been given permission to work. In Turkish society and history, NGOs have been given the right to provide services because the government thinks, 'I cannot do it, and so you do it.' Civil society and NGOs are being affected by many factors but the most important is their relationship with government.

In Turkey there is also a distinction between 'good NGOs' and 'bad NGOs'. Your ability to carry out activities depends on your proximity to the government. This creates a real separation within civil society and a withdrawal of civil society. In Turkey, we do not feel that the state is a supporter of NGOs, but rather that it is *against* NGOs. We see that the government is putting limitations on them, and this is affecting the ability of the NGOs to fulfil their roles.

There should be many voices of different NGOs regarding the Kurdish issue, but right now this is not possible. Generally in Turkey, there is a mentality that without conflict there can be no change. People think a war or conflict or fight is necessary; this is the mentality. I think that we should consider the internalisation of democratisation here. I am not only referring to the institutionalised NGOs and but also the very comfortable and lax or 'loose' NGOs. They are also very important because they represent mainly women and children. Especially in the last debates, there was an issue of exclusion of women from the process. Right now there are efforts to promote women's contribution and participation in the peace process. At the moment, women are not included in the Kurdish process. Women's participation is highly important, because I believe their participation will ensure that the result is permanent.

In our project we found that financing is essential. It is important that you have money, but NGOs are often questioned about the source of their funding. Some NGOs get money from the government or from other public institutions, but even public funding is questioned. On the other hand, the European Union's (EU) interest has increased the number of projects in Turkey. There are now many projects, but it is creating a problem because NGOs are unable to focus on one thing. Instead, they are working on separate aims. NGOs have great potential in Turkey, but there is a lack of experienced staff and a lack of professionalism. There is also a lack of education amongst NGOs, directly related to financing and money.

The role of the media is another important factor that can be good or bad for conflict resolution. With regards to media and the process, sometimes it affects the issue negatively and sometimes it affects it positively. Let me give you an example from my study as to why this relationship is important. In Izmir City, we focused on two districts with Turkish and Kurdish populations. We surveyed them right after some rebellions took place. The Turkish people said that the Kurdish problem is a regional and social underdevelopment problem. They described it as a discrimination and terrorism problem and blamed the manipulation of foreign powers. But the Kurdish people said that the issue was about violence against their rights and a lack of democracy in Turkey. The way the media presents the conflict will affect how the population interprets and understands it.

In our study we also asked about institutionalised prejudices. Both parties have a lot of prejudices against each other. The Turkish people generally think that the Kurdish people have a tendency towards violence. They also think that Kurdish people have many children, that they are uneducated, and that they are illiterate. Those are some of the basic ideas. On the other hand, Kurdish people think that Turkish people feel that they are superior, that they have no interest in living together, that they are uninterested in living peacefully and are undemocratic. These are some of the opinions and prejudices held by each side.

If this is the case, what should be done? I think that NGOs should play the role as a facilitator for negotiations. They should not

explain things, but rather help both parties to talk to each other. How can this facilitator role be carried out by NGOs? This is not a normal facilitator role, but there should be some principles here. We call this ‘quality contact’. In our study, we asked questions such as ‘what do you call yourself?’ or ‘how do you describe yourself?’ We learned that people describe each other in terms of their religion and ethnic origin. Another interesting thing is that when people have a higher level of education, they ostracise the other party, and this ostracising is increasing. This is a sad reality because education should end discrimination. There is not a model or an example in the world of where this also takes place. Yet in Turkey, when the level of education increases, discrimination increases as well.



Speaker Ayşe Betül Çelik

We need quality contact, which means bringing people together from both sides under the same and equal conditions. We gather professors, teachers, or engineers together because they have common roles and interests, which help to create some common

ground. We do not have them create solutions to the Kurdish problem or the Turkish problem, but instead look at other social problems. By solving these smaller, common problems, people from different sides come together. At the end of 2009, we had held 140 workshops. But we did not develop a measurement framework, so it is difficult to know what effect these workshops had on the individual participants.

NGOs can work together in one area and try to enlighten society. For example, a few NGOs can come together and agree on something, and then they can go back and try to make that view prevalent within their society. We took a decision to publish a common declaration, but we did not follow up the declaration so we do not have any data on the effect it had. There are problems of prejudices and injustice, but because we did not monitor the effects, we do not know what impact we had on these problems.

Another issue is citizen diplomacy, whereby the idea is to find financial resources to try to organise a solution to the conflict and increase traction either officially or unofficially. The point here is to increase contact amongst the nations to address issues of prejudice as well as psychological problems, to create understanding, and change the perception of each other. In order to do that, you have to plan everything. In Turkey, we are not a nation that has a habit of planning. I do not question the wise people, but it seems that the commission was established without a real plan. If we do things *with* plans, it may create better results.

Mary Anderson wrote a book called 'Do No Harm'. It says in this book that sometimes doing *nothing* is better than doing *something* unplanned or poorly thought out. We should question our actions. What type of change will it create in the lives of other people? We have to pick one aspect and we have to realise it. It is not possible to do everything at once. Also our target group; who are they? Are they students, the private sector, or the public sector? Which level of society? We have to decide on the target and then we need to question the type of change we are aiming for. What are we planning to change regarding the core of the problem? Is it a financial study? Is it an economic study? Is it a social study or a political study? We have to ask ourselves those questions when we are planning our work.

As a last remark, there are books and studies about civil society. I think that these sources are essential but unfortunately we cannot get the best benefit from them. We need our own studies at the local level. We could prepare a small documentary movie or a booklet of our own. Perhaps we could touch society through these different mediums. We live in a visual world filled with visual ideas. Socialising among the groups is very important, but it is important to provide enough human resources for this task. I find that we do not really get the full benefit of our cultural or local sources. That was my last point, thank you very much.

Moderator - Cengiz Aktar

We will probably need to change our language and try to use terms

that we have not used before. For example: alternative history, citizen diplomacy, and conflict resolution. These are all new terms that show that we are in a new era, but we have to fill the meaning of these terms. I believe that meetings such as this one will help. The Berghof Foundation and DPI organised this meeting, and it is important that we held this meeting in Turkey. Next, I will give the floor to Mr Hans-Joachim Giessmann, who is the Executive Director of the Berghof Foundation. He has completed a study with two other researchers, with whom he has published an important book on peace processes. In Turkey, we can say that peace has different dimensions. We are still in pursuit of peace, so such expertise is very beneficial. You have the floor, Mr Giessmann.

Speaker - Hans-Joachim Giessmann

Thank you very much for this introduction. Thank you also to the first speaker. Some of the findings that have been presented sound familiar, and some of the findings relate to what I am going to present, which will be enriched by findings from our own research. I would like to start with the potential roles for civil society in conflict resolution. If you look at what they have done or are doing in peacebuilding processes, you might be surprised about the variety of actions that can be carried out by civil society actors. The role of civil society actors as mediators is a fairly young or reinvented means of conflict transformation. International actors are trying to support conflicting actors to find common ground for conflict transformation. There is also a new tendency of insider mediators, which relies on people who have a strong footing and recognition

from within the constituency to speak up in a representative role, in parallel or in separate talks or negotiations.

Mediation is important to set stages; play icebreaker roles; and provide the space and structures that support conflict transformation. The second role is that of being negotiators or being members of negotiating teams. The female representative was very important in carving out the position of the government and partly paved the way for successful negotiations in East Timor. The third important role is that of facilitators, meaning to play a role in setting the space for negotiations but not taking on an active or proactive role as a stakeholder within the talks. That is very important because the role of facilitator opens a lot of opportunities to have back-channel conversations and communicate with conflicting parties without taking a stance. In this sense, the facilitator plays the role of a sounding board for the negotiating parties.

Fourth, as was already mentioned, is the role of the bridge-builder between official tracks and the public. Civil society actors can organise information campaigns but can also help to break deadlocks when negotiations get stuck because of the position of the negotiator. The role of pressure groups is also very important. Civil society actors can raise awareness about the importance of the negotiations within society. As was said before, media also plays a big role. Today it is not just the media in the traditional sense but also social media as a new space within which communication takes place across layers of society. This is a very under researched

area in its importance for conflict transformation. The growing numbers of virtual platforms offered by the internet are also an interesting form of civil society engagement. Lobbyism in terms of engagement or getting donor support for peacebuilding is another role that civil society actors can play; be it in their own capacity or as bridge-builders to international donors.

The most well-known role is possibly that of the watchdog, meaning looking carefully at what has happened within the official track by providing supervision and conducting close monitoring. Legitimacy can be provided by civil society actors as was seen in the constitutional process in South Africa. The referendum has brought about legitimacy by involving civil society in discussions surrounding proposals for the new constitution. Lastly, the role of civil society actors as educators and trainers for capacity building of those who are directly or indirectly involved in the peacebuilding process. This also refers to improved ownership for those who do not have access to the capacity building necessary to run the process.

Next, what is the distinct benefit of civil society actors? Some have been mentioned already. I will start with one, which is that civil society actors can raise issues. This is important because it may create issue-centred alliances, which is very different from political parties and other stakeholders, which have very fixed programmes and plans. Civil society actors can form flexible alliances around issues. These alliances can look much different from case to case, meaning that you have actors supporting one issue while

other actors support the others, which means you have a much broader sense of what the issues are within the process of conflict transformation. You have different alliances for different issues. Civil society actors are much more flexible than political parties and stakeholder groups.

The second point is campaigning. Civil society actors can be very active in mobilising the public by providing information and by serving as a sounding board. They cut across all parties and social groups. I have already mentioned monitoring, which is particularly important for cases of factual or perceived human rights violations and for the defence of the weaker against the stronger, particularly in situations where the rule of law is not guaranteed for all actors in the society. Advocacy, public communication, and bridge-building are important in so far as civil society can promote more critical and reflective agenda setting than other actors can do, by providing public pressure on issues that are of interest within the society, but also in addressing international support and creating opportunities for interaction across the boundaries of ethnic groups, religious groups, making the weaker voice heard in the society at large.

Socialisation amongst groups is also important because CSOs can create a sense of self-consciousness. Civil society can shape opinions within social groups, and thus create identities that are not given within the structures of the state or society. Some of them may relate to the creation of identity groups that are marginalised. For example, women's associations were already mentioned. Perhaps

the representation of women in this current setting is something that might be improved and civil society could play an important public pressure role.

What I think is of particular importance is local engagement, but also social reintegration and cohesion at the local level. There is a term of ‘reconciliation’, which I am cautious in using, especially with protracted conflicts. Getting the opinions of victims heard and taking them seriously, and creating an open dialogue over what has happened in the past is very important for social reintegration and cohesion. That includes giving political prisoners a voice in this dialogue. Very often they are forgotten. In case of the Basque country, we have seen how important it is to address the issue of political prisoners in order to create public dialogue over what must happen in the country. Finally, service delivery has been mentioned already.

I very much agree with what Ayşe Betül Çelik said about the catalytic and mutually reinforcing role that media and civil society can play. On the one hand, media is a messenger, but civil society is *also* a messenger. Both can play the role of a ‘sounding board’. The role of protection is very important. Making things public is a form of protection for civil society actors and also for public opinion, but there also needs to be protection for the media to speak out against the government, and more flexibility given to the media to speak up and reflect upon realities on the ground. Media are multipliers, but civil society actors are also multipliers and can

reinforce messages being given by the media. As far as support is concerned, I would say that there is a mutually reinforcing role that media and civil society can play, be it in disseminating information, but also in creating a positive image for a constructive conflict transformation process. Finally, media provides space for exchange and interaction, and has become a platform for the organisation of civil society actors in the field of media.

Next, I will discuss disabling and enabling factors surrounding conflict resolution. For the disabling factors, it is useful to think about what might cause a collision of strategic interests. I am not very familiar with the Kurdish and Turkish situation. From a European point of view, the instability in the neighbourhood is a concern because it can spill over into the domestic dynamics that are starting now, which would create a lot of trouble and burden the process by bringing other factors into the political discussion. International actors may be focused more on regional strategic stability instead of internal democratisation, which could also become an impediment in terms of supporting what is happening in Turkey.

The high levels of ongoing violence are also a disabling factor that can create mistrust. This destabilises the interests of conflicting actors to interact constructively. Another destabilising factor is the non-cooperative behaviour of stakeholders, meaning that negotiations are misused for propaganda or to address their own constituency but not in the sense of constructive engagement.

Radicalisation is also an issue. If you have a process of radicalisation at the fringes, it can threaten the centre over time and weaken the credibility of negotiating positions in a premature way.

Another disabling factor is that donors might be guided by selfish interests or a lack of empathy for ownership of the actors on the ground. As a caveat, with respect to civil society, it should not be forgotten that in processes like these we have NGOs mushrooming from the ground. If there is not a sustained willingness to drive the process, then they are left hunting for funds. In the end, those organisations may disappear as quickly as they appeared. Finally, donor resources can be a source of disempowerment for local communities. I asked an Afghan representative of civil society organisations, ‘What should we do better in terms of funding conflict transformation?’ His response was, ‘Give us less money.’ The reason behind this was that if money is not linked to certain processes, it may feed into corruption. In the end it may do more harm instead of supporting conflict transformation.

Just to end on an optimistic note, I would just like to reiterate what I said at the very beginning. Diversity is one of civil society’s strengths. Norm setting across all political parties and camps is very important for resistance against autocratic rule and intolerance. Secondly, there is the gendered nature of civil society. As has been said before, it exists in principle but civil society actors can do this better than political actors. The representation of women is crucial, because it provides access to large layers of society that would not

otherwise be addressed. It is not just a case of having more women represented; it is about representing society at large, and engaging large portions of society that would otherwise stay out of the process.

Thirdly, the globalisation of the local, meaning the constructive engagement of diaspora, is an important factor that could enable conflict transformation on the ground. This pertains in particular to this country and to this society, both in terms of capacity building and fundraising, but also for public policy and for promoting international awareness-raising. Finally, international political support and donor interests are important for backing, for lobbying, for providing structural assistance, and for bridge-building. The international community can put the necessary pressure on track one, something that civil society cannot do, and this can provide an environment conducive to democratisation processes across the whole of society.



Speaker Cengiz Aktar, Executive Director of Berghof Foundation and Speaker Prof. Hans-Joachim Giessmann, and Speaker Ali Bayramođlu

Moderator - Cengiz Aktar

Thank you very much, Mr Giessmann. After listening to Ayşe Betül Çelik, I was saying that we need to change our vocabulary. There are eight kinds of negotiators: mediators, facilitators, bridge-builders, pressure groups, lobbyists, supervisors, monitors, and trainers or educators. This is how our vocabulary will change. I asked Catriona Vine a question earlier during the break. I said that this text is the 'ABCs' of our work, and asked whether it would be translated into Kurdish or other languages. It will be very beneficial to have a guide in our hands. The floor is now yours.

Participant

I am a participant from Ordu province in the Black Sea region of Turkey, and the only person participating from the Black Sea region today. During the referendum process we built a new civil society organisation called the Ordu Civil Thought Platform. We have dedicated our efforts to making people say 'yes' to the referendum. We do not have a hierarchical structure, instead we come together when there is an event and then we disburse.

In March, we hosted some guests from the Kurdish province. It was the first event in Ordu. On the eve of the event, we experienced violence in Sinop and Samsun, two provinces in the Black Sea region. Around 300 civil society representatives from all over the province were invited. We had called them by phone, so that it would not be a public meeting. We invited the former President of the Nationalist Movement Party as well as some participants from

the Turkish Hearts, which is a nationalistic party and organisation. In terms of the Turkish Hearts and the Nationalist Movement Party, we preferred to invite individuals who hold some religious sensibilities. I directed the panel. Although we did not invite him, the Governor and the Vice-Governor came. It was our first experience with the Governor, and we were able to talk over tea with him after the meeting.

At the beginning, we collected written comments and questions from the participants. As far as I can observe, the people that we invited were mostly religious people. I find that in terms of empathy, religious people are very advanced. The former President of the Nationalist Party asked some gentle questions, but there was still some distrust. The Turkish people think that no matter how many rights we give the Kurdish people, they will still divide the country. Nevertheless, they were careful in their wording of the questions and respectful of the culture. We were glad to have held the event as there were useful contributions and opinions.

The first event was held in February, where there were around 40 participants. We organised this in Trabzon province and carried out roundtable meetings. In March, we came to Ordu where we hosted the 300 participants. We believe that there will be many stages to this process and want to take the next meeting to the Kurdish provinces. Although it is not directly related, we were concerned by the violence in Sinop and Samsun and whether it would affect the meetings. Specifically, we were concerned that

there might be a violent reaction. We learnt that the police forces had interviewed the Nationalist Party with the Turkish Hearts and ensured that there would be no violence. However, there are some nationalist or chauvinist movements like the Labour Party, and we were concerned that they might carry out violent activities. As far as I can see, the Labour Party members are very violent and reactionary.

Over the last two years, we have carried out studies on farmworkers collecting hazel nuts. For 20 years, they have been coming to Ordu as farmworkers. I have a childhood friend who owns some hazel nut gardens. When he was serving in the military he was shot in the foot by the PKK. For two years, he has employed Kurdish workers. If your garden is far away from the centre, then you employ groups of ten or 20. If you have enough room, you host them as well and provide them with breakfast, lunch, and dinner. I wanted to give this example because my friend is now very tolerant of Kurdish people. I wish it could be true for all of Ordu province.

The farmworkers are very welcomed by their Turkish employers but the Kurdish people have always supplied a source of cheap labour, making for a difficult relationship. As a journalist, I have heard talk about the fascist province of Izmir. I travelled to Izmir province and I interviewed the Republican People's Party. I also interviewed some shopkeepers. As far as I can understand, there are some mutual prejudices. But what feeds these prejudices? When I interview these people, they always say that Kurdish people were

very gentle during the 1960s and 1970s and that they were good people. Now, they say that Kurdish people are coming to Izmir and robbing their houses. They say that they are building new shops and that they are becoming employers. According to various studies, there are between 1.2 million and 4 million Kurdish people, who have been displaced to various parts of Turkey, and a certain proportion has settled in Izmir. This contact is feeding the prejudices that are evolving into a fascist reaction.

What is the role of civil society organisations and media? The politics taking place at the macro level are encouraging confrontation. Civil society has to deal with the militarism, nationalism, and gender discrimination supported by the political ruling party. In my opinion, coming back to the public to try to establish common ground is technically impossible. Maybe we can put pressure on the government. Are there any wise persons here? Apart from people like us, the wise persons have an advantage as they have the opportunity to be in contact with the Prime Minister. They need to tell the government to change their vocabulary and put an end to discriminatory attitudes in Izmir. There are Kurdish people, Turkish people, and gypsy people in Izmir, and there might be conflict at any time. Something should be done to prevent this.

There is a discourse issue, but this a class issue as well. In the coming period there may be an end to the conflict, but the Kurdish problem will not be resolved. It is the class situation and the economic situation that are triggering this issue. Improvements

will not come from the top, but from the grassroots. There are one million displaced persons. We cannot just say that the state did something wrong and then tell them to return to their village. These people are from here now; they are city people and urban people now. Finally, the role of civil society and the media is to apply pressure on decision makers.



Roundtable participants - session one

Speaker -Ayşe Betül Çelik

Of course we must apply pressure on the government to change their vocabulary. We carried out a study together with one of my master's students where we asked about the perceptions of Kurdish children. One of the perceptions was that they do not want to be considered as terrorists. They were saying that they are not recognised by the Turkish people. I do not know if there is anyone here from the media, but I would like to give some examples. Some television series like 'The Undying Heroes' are ultra-nationalistic soap operas. We asked, for example, do you want Kurdish

neighbourhoods? Do you want Turkish neighbourhoods? What are their perceptions? The media might do something to pressure decision makers, but they might also protect people's minds from discriminatory images.

Media can be considered a partner to civil society. It has a very important role. As a civil society organisation, your actions are only heard when they are broadcast by the media. There might be some pressure to change the constitution, but the media should be the media of peace.

Participant

The Kurdish issue is occupying the agenda of Turkey. There are good developments, but I would like to make some comments based on the area I am studying. Although I am not active now, I worked in the Women's Association against Discrimination for five years.

I would like to talk about a study I conducted on conflict resolution. We have been working on the headscarf ban actively in our association, and have thought about how this discussion could be beneficial for us. There have been instances where people were exiled and fired from institutions for wearing headscarves. The Kurdish issue is deeply influencing our issue, but there are other problems as well. For minorities, the headscarf issue is still valid. We have thought about how to apply these kinds of theories to the headscarf issue and have reached some conclusions.

There have been positive developments in recent years regarding the headscarf ban. The Justice and Development (AK Party) government has been able to introduce some new policies. For example, there is no longer a headscarf ban in the universities thanks to a notification from the Department of Higher Education. The headscarf issue is almost resolved, but there is no actual resolution because there is no legal security or legal basis to it. When I review conflict resolution theory, you mentioned some factors and various roles that could be undertaken by civil society. When people say that they do not want to see doctors with headscarves, I want to complain about them but there is no legal authority with which to do so. For myself and many women with headscarves, including students and working women, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) has enabled some positive changes, but there is still no legal basis to them. These are the types of issues that we have paid attention to in our studies.

Ayşe Betül Çelik mentioned intergroup communication. There are various negotiators including trainers, supervisors, reporters, and mediators. Especially in terms of the headscarf issue, there are shortcomings. As an NGO working on this issue, our target was always a legal change from the top. When you face such acute problems, you look for immediate solutions and legal changes. If you really want to provide a social peace and resolve conflict then you need to create an environment where everyone can learn something. They should be discussing these issues openly. Thank you very much.

Participant

I would like to thank the presenters. I am the Director of the Anatolian Platform. The Anatolian Platform is an umbrella organisation that combines 60 CSOs, representing civil society in Anatolia and formed by 40 years of tradition. On February 28, the army intervened against the Islamists in order to rejuvenate old values. The headscarf is only one of these issues. We are living in a divided society. We have always been saying that we should turn back to our old values and to our history in order to achieve peace. We are working on family-centred approaches, which emphasise the role of women in their families and we are using this model to try to provide education. Presently, we are trying to develop models so that we can encourage the state to take its hands off the issue of education.

The power of the media to represent itself is very important. We are not trying to impose models. In every locality, every association has the opportunity to develop its own models. We have associations in different parts of Turkey. We believe these types of efforts and contributions are very important and have always said that we are supporting such organisations. We are trying to reveal the factors that cause conflict. In order to resolve this issue you have to pay attention to the factors involved. For example, to what extent is imperialism influential in this conflict? Do we have a mentality of colonialism? In order to eliminate this colonialism, we have to provide messages to the entire world. This is not only important for the Kurdish people, but for various ethnic issues like the

Armenian issue. We have to take initiative as members of a religion rooted in peace. In our history there is a tradition of co-existence. We have to know each other and understand each other. That is why I believe these kinds of meetings are very useful. Thank you.

Participant

I have paid attention to the opening speeches. The positions presented are the result of studying the experiences of conflict-affected countries. I can definitively say that the positions presented have no correspondence to our country. I do not believe that they are relevant to our country. You have been talking about the ‘must bes’ or ‘should bes’. In terms of the Kurdish experience, you have talked about how things should be, but civil society is not involved in any part of this process. There is a commission of wise persons, but even in the formation of such a commission, the Prime Minister was the sole appointer with the support of his advisors. There were no discussions, nor were there any suggestions by the CSOs. The CSOs did not say that these people should be involved in the commission. I support the commission; however, I am trying to attract your attention to the uniqueness of the situation. It is a Turkish type of democratisation. We have to distinguish between ‘Turkish type’ and ‘Kurdish type’. This is the ‘Turkish type’ not the ‘Kurdish type’.

There is the ‘Turkish type’ of resolution. The rulers are trying to control the PKK beyond the borders and are finally trying to convince the organisation to lay down arms with no legal arrangements

needed. They are asking that people go to their homes if they are not involved in violent operations. If they are involved, then they are asking them to go to a foreign country. I do not believe that this is the solution. The Kurdish problem is created by the rejectionist ideology of the Turkish state. You cannot overemphasise this. The Kurdish problem is a problem of confrontation. In terms of the current developments and situation, the government is saying that if you are not participating in the violence then you should participate in Turkish society. What are you going to do with these people? There are 10,000 political prisoners because of the Kurdish problem. What are you going to do with them? Nobody is talking about amnesty, even though there might be some general amnesties at stake. What are you going to do with these people in prison? I myself was a prisoner. Prisoners often experience psychological problems and difficulties gaining employment. The prisoners have formed an ideology as a party to this conflict; how are we going to deal with this? Have any preparations been made? Are there any suggestions? If the problem is weapons, where are they going to put these weapons?

To speak frankly, I am following the Kurdish problem very closely. Even though I am close to the Kurdish problem, I have trouble understanding this. The Prime Minister is saying that they should lay down their arms and go beyond the borders. They are in the mountains; it is not like taking a cab and coming back to the city centre. There are difficult conditions in the mountains, such as bears. How are you able to lay down your arms? It is better to

ask them to surrender. You cannot say lay down your arms and go beyond the borders. To create an environment of peace, you have to eliminate an environment of weapons, operations, and the possibility of being imprisoned. Once we have eliminated this conflict environment, then civil society can be involved.

I think that the government is trying to ignore the actual dimensions of the situation, and especially the social dimensions. Two years of peace is very important, but the problems that you ignore might be explosive in future. You have to pay attention to these dimensions and take precautions. It is an environment in which guns were silenced. I would like to congratulate everyone who contributed to the ceasefire, but the actual process is about to begin. What are you going to do with the people in the mountains? What are you going to do with the people in the prisons? What are you doing to do with the millions of displaced persons? Neighbours who have prejudices, who have grudges against each other, what are you going to do with them? They have formed a world in the middle of this conflict.

You can say that you have changed the constitution and that you have given them the right to education in their mother tongue, but this is a problem of *process* where this is not enough. This is a peace process in which an egalitarian and honoured peace must be established. In order to establish such a peace, we must understand that it is a peace *process*. Some are concerned that civil society is composed of business associations and that civil society is too

close to the government. As civil society, it is very important to stand impartial and independent, but if you are not a party or if you are not close to one of the parties, you might experience discrimination. For example, you might face problems if you are seen to be criticising the approach of the party leader. That is why it is very important to keep the political parties open to any kind of contribution from civil society.



*Öztürk Türkođan, Raci Bilici, Mehmet Ali Eminođlu, Selçuk K pç k,
DPI Council of Experts Member and Moderator Bejan Matur*

Participant

The mediator role of CSOs is very important. In countries like ours, CSOs have trouble. In the region, we have been struggling with civil society. I am not talking about project-based CSOs. In recent periods, there have been various project-based CSOs, supported by various circles, with various targets. I am talking about serious CSOs which are struggling to improve the future of this country in social and political fields.

The role of CSOs cannot be undertaken properly because, as was the case with the former government, the current government is trying to obstruct civil society. For example, in the commission of wise persons, our general presidents were involved, which was very important. However, the bar associations were not involved, which is a huge shortcoming. Despite the shortcomings, the situation is not bad. But in the region and in this conflict environment, we do not have the conditions to contribute to the process. Many of our directors, managers, and members are imprisoned. They were struggling to contribute to peace and now they are invalidated because they are in prison.

Our institutions are under total oppression. From time to time, you may hear through the press that there have been some steps indicating goodwill to contribute to the process. For example, there are sometimes visits for the people imprisoned by the PKK. Sometimes we interview people who were tortured, but when you do this kind of work, you risk being imprisoned by the government. All of the government, including the Justice and Development Party (AK Party), has excluded civil society from such a process. This process needs CSOs. The government should confront the past and release all of the civil society representatives who are in prison. The chair of the Confederation of the Public Workers Union is a wise person but he is currently being tried for terrorism. We have to establish the groundwork for democratic politics. If we are sincere, we have to lay the groundwork and trust one another. For example, my friend was talking about the headscarf bans. For

years and years the government was saying that they were going to solve the headscarf ban. Yet, even though there are no obstacles, it seems that the government does not want to solve this issue. We have to lay the groundwork for democratic politics by establishing constitutional warranties. This is something that the government can do.

This process is very difficult. From now on, we have to deal with the prejudices that Turkish and Kurdish people hold against one another. We need to change our textbooks, because they are nationalist and racist. There was a study that scanned textbooks and found more than 300 racist phrases. We have to have an education system based on human rights. We have to educate the new generation. This new generation should accept the other. The more educated people are; the more racist they become because they are being educated in a racist and nationalist education system. We have to change this.

Secondly, the press is playing a dangerous game. The press are parties to torture, massacres, and unidentified murders in the region. People are being murdered in front of their eyes, but when you read the news you see something completely different. As the Human Rights Association, we have clear reports and declarations, but the media does not pay attention. It is openly lying. The Kurdish people and people with different identities from the western side of Turkey can be easily motivated to participate in this process because they have experienced oppression. They

are more humanistic and can be involved in a peaceful manner. Civil society should be encouraged and supported in this aim.

Participant

When the title of a meeting is ‘The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Resolution’, one has to talk about the general landscape surrounding civil society in Turkey. From what I have understood from the presentations, the main thing is *methodology*. Everyone knows about the past. Until the beginning of 2000, we could talk about two different civil society organisations. First, there were the professional organisations, which are the labour unions. These kinds of organisations were insensitive to the conflict and were in line with the political ideology of the state. But there was also a left wing civil society movement, which was totally against the state and was also rejected by the state. Since the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) became the government in the 2000s, some walls and barriers have been destroyed. The European Union (EU) process started and now today, we have a different landscape. Those who were opposing the state are now ready to have open dialogue with the state.

At the macro level there might have been political changes within the state, but we have not seen changes in the judiciary and in the bureaucracy. These institutions are not ready to tolerate civil society’s involvement. The other civil society, those that were insensitive to the conflict up to the beginning of the 2000s, have now contributed to this process and provided some members

to the wise persons commission. Two different types of CSOs are now working together through the wise persons committee. We understand that they are ready to contribute to the process.

I would like to attract your attention to the following process. We have been talking about the contact-builders, the bridge-builders, and the facilitators. In the context of the solution to the Kurdish problem, I do not think that we have issues with contact. The state will get into contact whenever it wants. We have the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) in the great national assembly, which can be contacted by the state. I think at least some of the elements you have mentioned here are not vital, because we do not have a problem of dialogue or contact. If the state wants, it can easily get in contact. The letters from Mr Öcalan for example, are being read through the national intelligence organisation. The letters are being read and they can come together at any time they want. Perhaps there should be effort put towards preparing society. Ayşe Betül Çelik has been saying that the conflict cannot be settled only through constitutional or legal changes, because the conflict is deep-rooted in society. In western parts of Turkey, when a person speaks Kurdish on the telephone, people around them stare.

The Kurdish problem is not the only problem; we also have the headscarf issue. We have a very angry society on our hands. Maybe civil society, rather than acting as the facilitator for the parties, can instead *prepare* society. Our friend mentioned that we need an integrated study in order to create social peace. The

coming together of the all political parties is not enough. We have perceptions that have been formed over more than 70 years, which are very nationalistic and start with the curriculum. Please pay attention to the fundamental law of national education. Clearly see that we need to redesign society, starting from the grassroots right up to institutional structures, in order to prepare for peace.

Participant

I am from the International Strategic Research Centre in Mardin province. Before I came to this meeting, I made some notes about what CSOs have been doing in the region for the last two years. Mr Hans-Joachim Giessmann and Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik scientifically presented their field data from before, during, and after the conflict in order to resolve it. What can we do? In the post conflict period, what methods should be followed? They were already mentioned by our presenters, but as an association and research centre, we have identified some points and some specific issues to research and investigate.

There is a fire in the region and there is a fire in the country. In order to extinguish this fire, CSOs should be involved. We have established a civil society desk, which we have a close synergy with. When we are talking about CSOs, although their founding principles may be different, their general purpose is to provide solutions. In Turkey, we have a mentality where society exists for the sake of the state. We have tried to establish an alternative mentality of state for the sake of society. Now we have CSOs that are independent from the state.

In the past, there were times when, if you wanted to say something, you might be criticised for your opinions. In the recent period, we are able to easily raise criticisms. People are saying that the worse peace is better than the best war. Some CSOs are saying that they are ready to contribute and that young people should participate in the peace process. Civil society has started to say that peace cannot be ignored now. There was a platform established for peace and people are coming together in order to force the state towards action. Refugees are coming from abroad; people were saying that if we do not deal with these refugees then they will ruin our daily lives. They are saying that they will rob our houses and attack us. We are concerned for the situation of refugees and have made a declaration to the Middle East Solution Platform regarding this issue.

Another issue that civil society should pay attention to, which Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik mentioned, is the presence of ‘good NGOs’ and ‘bad NGOs’. There are some CSOs that have been attacking the solution process, as well as some aggressive NGOs. The lack of regional solution is a shortcoming for us. The two parties are able to accept the individuals named for the wise persons committee, who are now intervening and providing solutions. The wise persons are composed of opinion leaders and religious community leaders. They are mostly civilians.

The NGOs should have some capacity for empathy. It is very important not to offend the Turkish people. I am trying to talk from the perspective of the Turkish people. For example, your

neighbour is attacking you, but your neighbour is trying to make a living. For 70 years, the Turkish people have thought ‘it is my state; it is my flag; it is my country’. You should not offend this mentality otherwise it will spark a hostile reaction.

Anatolia belongs to us. I attach huge importance to the concept of Anatolia. *Inshallah* we will arrive at some good conclusions. This meeting was very important for us because of its relevance to the studies we have been carrying out with the civil society desk.

Participant

I am a writer for *Burgin Daily* newspaper. In the United Kingdom and Ireland, they have solved the issue of conflict, which is very beneficial because now we can learn from their experience. Between 1914 and 1916, the borders of this country were drawn. Various states were created during World War I but Turkey was a unique country. During the establishment of this country, they created a motto to be memorised by all the children in Turkey, which is ‘we are all Turkish’. In a period in which everyone was saying that ‘we are all Turkish’, some people rebelled against this and blood has been spilled. Protecting the honour of the people is very important because they have paid heavy prices to defend their nationality and prove that they exist.

We can now hold meetings in a relaxed manner, which is a very good development. But we should be aware that the occupation of Istanbul is being celebrated. 600 years ago, Istanbul was occupied

and now they are celebrating it. We are living in a country where the words 'Armenian' or 'Kurdish' are 'bad' words. One of our friends talked about 'Turkish type' solutions and one of our friends talked about non-legal solutions to the headscarf ban. As far as I can understand, in Turkey, the government is producing solutions without any consensus. Some people think that if they are going to solve issues in this manner, then it is better to have *no* solutions at all.

Our Sunni Islamic identity is going to become the *sovereign* identity. If we cannot reject this new identity, then it will be a very bad situation for Armenians, homosexuals, and other segments of society. We are living in a society where there is a huge amount of lies. If you want to become *actual* brothers and sisters, we must ensure the honour of the people and pursue truth. I am trying to find some goodwill in the practices of the government, but this should not be left to the wise persons only, we should be 'wise persons' together.



Speaker Ali Bayramođlu and Rober Koptař

Participant

Many friends spoke about the democratisation problems of Turkey and some talked about the shortcomings and weaknesses of CSOs. We have been talking about the wise *men*, and it was said that we should use the terms ‘wise persons’. If you examine CSOs in the US or Europe, they are very different than ours. I am from Batman and CSOs are very good at handling the situation despite all the handicaps and restrictions created by the state. I believe that the formation of the wise persons committee will create a huge problem because it risks ignoring the contributions of CSOs. Before we had the wise persons, there were various intellectuals within CSOs who held positions on these issues and did not hesitate to tell the truth. They were very powerful and what they say is still very important for us in the conflict resolution process. We will still gather with them, whether they are wise or not.

I would like to talk about the experience in Batman. We have been talking about conflict resolution and maybe my concept of conflict resolution is different from yours. Let me give an example. The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) decided to establish democratic tents in each of the 10 provinces. While the CSOs were waiting in these tents, the Ministry of Interior made a decision to destroy all the tents. In one night, all the tents were destroyed and members of the CSOs were beaten. They were sued for using illegal electricity. Our Members of Parliament carried out a demonstration where they sat in the middle of the road. A Member of Parliament was shouting at the police and kicking the passing police car. They established the tents again next to the municipality building. The Member of Parliament called and asked me to come and be a mediator. There was one policeman for each individual and the police were telling them to remove the tents.

The Member of Parliament was saying to me, ‘Please visit the Governor. If they do not allow us to establish the tents here, we will turn Batman upside down. We will wear guerrilla uniforms and turn this city upside down.’ I told the Governor that they promised to remove the tents and asked him if we could make arrangements to find empty spaces and establish the tents there. The Governor said, ‘No, I have the orders of the Ministry of Interior.’ The Member of Parliament said that Batman would be turned upside down.

The next day, the tanks came to the city and the Kurdish Party was preparing Molotov cocktails. Masses of people were provoking the

police and becoming very tired. The Member of Parliament said, 'They are very tired. Please visit the Governor to remove the police.' The police were saying, 'We are very tired, please do something to remove these people and settle this demonstration.' I visited the Governor and told him that the Member of Parliament did not want to hold a demonstration. I saw a kebab shop. The Governor said that he would not allow us to put up a tent but I said, 'Let us do something in this shop, I have visited the demonstrators, I have told them to please go inside this shop. You can do something here.' Everyone accepted.

Next, they said that they wanted to go to the shop with a mass demonstration. The Governor said that he had orders from the Ministry of Interior, 'What can I do if they start to throw Molotov cocktails?' I told him that the masses are tired and asked him to allow us to arrange for buses to transfer the people to the kebab shop. Finally, as mediators, we said, 'Enough is enough.' We do not want to do anything else. The Member of Parliament made a speech where he said that our resistance gained victory and that they would establish our tent at that square. My impression is that on the one hand, there is the appointed person, the Governor, who does not want to make concessions. He is not concerned with understanding the people. On the other hand, you have the people who are waging a struggle. He is an elected person who should satisfy the masses. This small experience could be a snap shot of the general situation in Turkey.

Participant

We are organised in 72 universities in Anatolia. These universities are organised around the western and eastern parts of Turkey. I want to underline what Ayşe Betül Çelik said about how the Kurdish problem cannot be solved *only* through politics. The CSOs are very important because political decisions do not solve this issue completely. There is a deadlock here. When there is deadlock, it becomes harder to find a solution. Ayşe Betül Çelik said that these kinds of problems were created because of conflict. My grandmother passed away when she was 115 years old. My mother was once angry with us and said, 'Do not fight!' But my grandmother said, 'Without any fights, there can be no union.' So we have to 'fight' in order to arrive at agreement. We have to change the image of the Kurds in the minds of the Turkish people and vice versa.

In order to do that, around April 2013, we will organise a constitution workshop which will be attended by 600 students, representing our associations in four corners of the country. Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik talked about alternative history. We have to pay attention to the curriculum and to the textbooks, and ensure that they tell an accurate story. In one region, 40,000 people were massacred and 40,000 went missing. These incidents should be written down and the old curriculum should be removed and questioned. Thank you for touching on these issues. Mr Hans-Joachim Giessmann said the youth might be very affected. As the Anatolia Association of Students, we believe this and have conducted some studies on this.

In our local studies, we are carrying out meetings and trying to bring these issues onto the student agenda at the grassroots level.

The point about 'fund hunters' and 'donor hunters' was very important because CSOs are mushrooming. Since they know how, they are writing project proposals for the EU and other institutions but they are not using these funds as they have promised. As CSOs we have to focus on fundraising issues.

A couple more issues and then I will close. At a meeting, people were talking about their experiences of oppression. At our table there were Islamist people, right-winged people, and left-wing people. Unbelievably, right-wing people were oppressed, Islamist people were oppressed, and left-wing people were oppressed. Young people were being used to oppress one another.

There should be serious studies to reveal the past of this country. The first step is going to the field. Secondly, project studies and reporting should expand in order to share our experiences. Thirdly, there should be studies used to train CSOs. There should be a brotherhood and a sisterhood relationship amongst the nations. There should be no eastern or western civilisation. As the world, we are a unified civilisation. We need to go to the people and reach out to them.

Participant

I would like to raise some objections. The Batman situation was very important. 'Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In' written by Roger Fisher is one of the most important books and should be included in our reading list. The Palestinian-Israeli Oslo negotiations were based on this. 'Negotiating Agreement Without Giving In' is the story of Batman, based on what we have learnt from you. From the other perspective you can ask, why should they be withdrawing with their weapons? The PKK might think that it is easy to bury the guns because whenever you need them you can still unbury them, this should be considered in the solution.

Secondly, I would like to say a couple of words on the issue of media. What do we have as obstacles to a solution? There is the problem of military and paramilitary, but 90 per cent of these issues have been addressed. There are also the village guards. Although we have a paramilitary structure, the village guards are armed from top to bottom but prefer to stay out of this issue. There is the political aspect and the legal aspect, which raises questions as to whether the public prosecutors and judges will pose an obstacle. The mainstream media is standing outside. When you talk about the mainstream media, they were never independent from the state. They were under the direction of the political power, so when the political power started to say 'A', they started to say 'A'. The Prime Minister got together with the owners and gave the media bosses orders on how to deal with news about terrorism. Now this process has been reversed and the media is very positive towards the peace

process. If this continues, the media will not be an obstacle.

It was said there should be a temporary solution law, which means that those who express their own opinions be provided legal security. For those who speak out, the public prosecutors should not be able to sue them arbitrarily. The same thing is valid for the withdrawal. There should be legal impunity for those involved in the withdrawal and for those who discussed the constitutional process. Transitional justice is very important for those who actively participate in this process. In practice, the main obstacles are the public prosecutors and judges who might provoke the process. Henry Kissinger has a quote regarding conflict resolution. He says, 'The most enduring agreements are the agreements in which the parties leave the table in an egalitarian manner.' There is no such thing as 100 per cent gain and 100 per cent loss. Equal non-satisfaction is very important. You have to think, 'I could not take what I want but the opposing party could not take what they want either.'

Participant

In terms of the Kurdish problem, we have to take CSOs very seriously. From society's perspective, the Kurdish issue is not a problem of economic crisis or under-development. If it were, the Kurdish problem would be worse. The Kurdish problem relates to the violation of the fundamental rights of the Kurdish people. The main problem is the assimilation issue. The Kurdish problem is about Kurdish efforts to protect their own existence.

Some circles are establishing foundations or associations. There are various professional organisations that are close to the government ruling powers. Although small in numbers, we have very distinguished CSOs, and what they do is very significant. What should the role of CSOs be in conflict resolution? We are always trying to keep our silence in order not to harm the process, but this moment should be used to build bridges and eliminate the destruction caused by war.

I would like to touch upon the issue of wise persons. 63 people were selected. The Prime Minister appointed these people and then expects everything from them, but we should not leave these people alone. They might have responsibility in settling the process, but as CSOs we should support the wise persons. We should not be pessimistic. I would like to salute you all with the hope of peace.



Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, Öztürk Türkođan

Speaker - Ayşe Betül Çelik

I would like to pick up where you left off. Leaving the table with an equal degree of dissatisfaction is what diplomacy is about. We were talking about what civil society can do. There might be some situations where both parties can leave with an equal degree of satisfaction, but we need to think outside the box. Creativity and questioning is very important. As mentioned, I believe the study carried out by the Historical Foundation of Turkey was very important, but unless you change people's mentality, they will still learn what they want. We have to teach the population to think in a creative and critical manner. We can also discuss whether your examples of mediation were right or not. As mentioned by Hans-Joachim Giessmann, there are different methods of mediation. Another form of mediation is to convey the views of both sides. In these kinds of situations you need to be creative. One of our friends from *Burgin* newspaper said that even in the worst situation he was optimistic.

I do not want to leave this meeting with the feeling that my views were found to be pessimistic. I can only say that the most creative ideas are expressed when the situation is at its worst. I have given the example of mediation because I want to show this optimistic aspect. In the case of Batman, our friend became a mediator by himself, but there could also be training for mediators. Finally, I want to give two positive examples. First, there was an organisation which taught us about alternative journalism during the period of the hunger strikes, which is relevant because we were discussing the

media. Secondly, regarding violence against women, there was an initiative called 'We Are Not Men' which was very creative. We have to be self-confident and believe that we can produce alternatives. By building trust, we can support peace.

Speaker - Hans-Joachim Giessmann

I have five observations. First of all, I think you are right. There is no reason to assume that there are models that can simply be applied to Turkey or to any other country. That was not the purpose of this presentation, the purpose was to bring some lessons learned to the table and then pick up on what might make sense and what might not. We completed a study comparing nine different situations of security transition in the past years. There were a couple of lessons learned that might make sense. Let me mention a couple of others.

First of all, women have become side-lined in the peace process. Secondly, youth are often marginalised. Changes at the leadership level are much easier than at the rank and file level. The role of political prisoners is underestimated in the process of peacebuilding. Their reputation was very high during the conflict but once the peace process starts they tend to be forgotten, which is risky because it tends to erode the constituency that has supported the conflict stakeholders. Finally, I think an interesting conclusion for us is that challenging the paramilitary organisations might be a mistake, because they can contribute to stabilising the peace agreement and keeping confidence in an atmosphere where there is not full trust on either side.

Next, it is all about changing mind sets on both sides. It is dealing with perceptions and misperceptions on either side about the other. Not to create a sense of impunity or forgiveness, but rather to accept that there might be different positions, be they right or wrong. Language is important. I found myself reminded that phrases or even words can become empty phrases if they are used without being substantiated, such as 'peace', 'conflict', or 'terrorist'. It is important for civil society to point to the substance of what civil society can do to change the mind set. Even the term 'civil society', as broad as it is, may not be functional or convincing enough for others in to be accept it as a serious partner.

Fourthly, the influence of civil society may be poor, but it is a matter of different speeds and different issues that are at stake. You have to find out what works well and what does not work well. I will also respond to those who said that professional organisations are more reluctant to enter into negotiations. In my experience, once political change accelerates, professional associations are quick to adapt to the situation. Independence of civil society is key. Civil society needs to be independent of pressure imposed by the government, as well as governmental strategies which try to co-opt civil society in order to create greater legitimacy. Independence is really important and key for keeping civil society influential.

Moderator - Cengiz Aktar

While I was listening to you, I was thinking that DPI could prepare a map of civil society initiatives during the process, which could be very beneficial in showing us who is doing what and where. Maybe we could have a set of guidelines, which would be very useful. In the four corners of the world, various CSOs are undertaking various works. It might be useful for us to know about this. Thank you, Mr Hans-Joachim Giessmann and thank you, Professor Ayşe Betül Çelik.



Roundtable participants during session one

Session Two

Moderator – Bejan Matur⁶

Firstly, I would like to thank DPI and the Berghof Foundation for organising this valuable roundtable meeting. In the afternoon session, we will discuss the role of civil society from different perspectives. NGOs and CSOs sometimes exaggerate their role, while the government sometimes underestimates their role. I do not think that either perspective is true. We talked earlier about the stock of weapons, the ceasefire, and the armistice, but these topics are not actually the end point. This is the beginning of a very long road and I believe NGOs will play an important role because they know and are able to affect society, and take decisions to society. As such, they have an enormous role to play.

The Kurdish problem has many dimensions, including the acceptance of the Kurdish language, the education issue, and centralism issues. As such, there are many titles within the Kurdish problem. We are now in a very thrilling, exciting process. We feel that we are in the age of transformation and we see how the government has changed things in the country over the last 10 years. The NGOs also contributed to this cause, but we cannot relax because it is now that our duty is starting. We should not be lazy at this important time.

⁶ Bejan Matur is a renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. She was previously a columnist for Zaman newspaper, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Bejan Matur has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. She is the Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

The Turkish model was discussed in the morning and could be a possibility. When DPI conducted a comparative study of the United Kingdom, we analysed the Northern Ireland issue and learned a lot from their experience. We learned how the Irish and the English people solved their problem. They told us, ‘It is *our* experience but you should improve and develop *your* own model.’ We may name this model the ‘Anatolian model’ or the ‘Turkish model’. Of course we will hear different experiences but in the end we will find our unique way, which we hope will be permanent. In moving towards this aim, we will never give up. We will not be embarrassed about needing to try and try again. Now I would like to give the floor to Etyen Mahçupyan. He now works as a consultant to TESEV and as a columnist. Before that, he was Editor in Chief of Agos. He has many books, and is famous for his critical columns.



Moderator, Bejan Matur

Speaker - Etyen Mahçupyan

Thank you Bejan Matur for the introduction and to the Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation for hosting us today. There will be two parts to my speech. To start, I will look at NGOs and focus on what can we do in the future. When we look at ourselves, we seem to be lazy, as though we are avoiding taking on strong roles. If this is true, how can we discuss the role of NGOs in conflict resolution? I can tell you that NGOs will play a positive role, but what guarantee do we have that when NGOs intervene in politics that the result will be positive? As we cannot guarantee this, it must remain a question for now.

Why would an NGO want to solve a conflict? I know there are some NGOs that would *not* want to solve a conflict. Besides, who is to say that the solution would be positive? Without knowing the ideologies of the NGOs, we cannot undergo meaningful analysis. The role of NGOs is being discussed as though it was something technical. Playing a role means intervening in the public arena and participating in politics.

Without talking about politics, how can you be intervening in politics? As NGOs, we want to intervene in politics and be political actors. When you decide to participate in politics, you become responsible for your actions; you cannot wash your hands of it anymore. You cannot only be an audience or say, 'now I will be an audience' and later say, 'now I will intervene or mediate in politics.' It is not an option anymore.

Thirdly, when we say ‘civil society’, we consider it to be an organised body because there is an element of institutionalisation and hierarchy. It has a unique system. For this reason, I would say that there is a specific mentality held by NGOs and that without questioning the internal cohesion of NGOs, you cannot really talk about NGOs. For our own civil society, what we do and say should be highly consistent. The fourth thing is that the NGOs are an extension of the modern people. Civil society is the result of society’s multiculturalism. There are many different NGOs, but there is conflict amongst them. When we talk about conflict resolution, we may need to first ask the NGOs whether they have solved their own conflicts before they try to solve the conflicts of the country. This is very important and the NGOs should really see themselves from this perspective.

What can we do? There are three steps. The first pertains to the conflict and the definition of the conflict. How we define the conflict will influence how we choose to solve it. If we describe the conflict in a broader way rather than in a narrow way, I believe that we will open the door to NGOs in many different fields. There is a political arena where the political parties cannot reach, but I believe NGOs can reach this specific arena, which proves that NGOs are also political actors. They are the followers of peace. However, there are political liabilities. You are responsible for what you have done, but you are also responsible for what you will not do. Anything that you will *not* do also means something, as you will be judged for this as well.

The second step is about entering into politics. Let us focus on the conflict again. When we say ‘conflict’, we are talking about one conflict, but in life there are many conflicts. This is just one conflict of many. Sometimes there can be a collision of conflicts and often a single event can cause a conflict to erupt. When we talk about the solution to the conflict, we are talking about a conflict that seems unsolvable. When a problem has renewed itself or been prolonged with time, it creates a ‘culture of conflict’. As the conflict creates its own culture, it affects the political actors and mechanisms. NGOs can intervene but should have consistency and the same mentality when doing so.

Politics are separated into two parts. One is the pre-period of the conflict, and the other is the post-conflict period. It is the NGOs’ responsibility to intervene both pre and post-conflict. It is not only about solving conflicts after they happen, but also preventing them when they might happen. We feel like the conflict has happened in the past, which makes it seem like we are in the post-conflict phase, but in Turkey, there are other conflicts, of which we are now in the pre-period. Our NGOs should also intervene in those conflicts. There should be a high level of consistency. The mentality should be the same, because if you are defending freedoms, you have to defend the same freedom for another conflict without making a distinction. If you look at the pre-conflict era, it is usually characterised by an unbalanced situation. An unbalanced situation generates politics and those politics can create long-term, unsolvable conflicts. When I say ‘unbalanced’ I am referring to unequal power. In history there are many examples of this.

Next, how can we really ever intervene? Politics can only be realised by the political actors. Those political actors should act in a representative manner. For this reason, we very naturally accept that in politics, there can only be people who have a talent for acting as a representative and who have a good relationship with their own people. It means that those political actors have two types of politics. One is for the rivals or the outsiders, and the other is for his own people. The culture of conflict is set by internal politics. Internal talks may be more meaningful in the long-term because you are discussing issues with your own people. I think that political actors seem like they want to solve the conflict but at the same time they keep engaging in internal politics rather than discussing with rivals. This is what I observe.

Language is also very important. Generally after the conflict, a new language emerges through the repetition of terms. When you see a certain term, you know that term belongs to a particular identity and that the other party never ever uses that term, instead they use another. After a while, we see that there are two terms, which are contradictory and opposite of each other. The obvious example is whether we say 'P-K-K' or 'Pa-Ka-Ka.' If you hear one party say 'Pa-Ka-Ka' you know which group they are coming from.

The second thing is psychology. Sometimes, people have an understanding of victimhood. Even the strong party feels that they are being victimised. The powerful party feels like they are being treated unjustly because they are losing something to the other

party, even if they are powerful. In this case, they are expecting justice to come from outside. They believe that there will be a god coming, a supreme power that will solve all of their problems. If you think in this way, the resolution of the conflict will be years and years away.

The third issue is related to memory. What have we been through? Why? It is about the short history of the past. It will also be combined with the real history of the country. Even when you see and are faced with betrayal, you yourself can be named as a betrayer by the parties as well. There may be people who have different opinions and might be seen as betrayers too.

There is also religious segmentation. Each party names itself as a religious segment. They also produce a socio-economic side. For this reason, the conflict renews and reproduces itself. That is why there is a cultural structure to the conflict. As part of wider politics, NGOs can help to create an objective language to deal with issues of criticism and memory. By looking at the 'other' you will open channels of communication. A new language brings a new approach and meaning, but of course it is important to fill this meaning. It is important to solve concrete problems rather than abstract ones. The better you solve the concrete ones, the more you will feel like you succeed in real politics.

An NGO employee is not a referee. If you think that you are a referee or an expert then you will fall into a trap. Of course,

generating information and knowledge is helpful, but knowledge can only be the language of politics; it cannot be real politics itself. If the NGOs can go into politics with the knowledge they create and generate, then I believe they will be part of conflict resolution.



Speaker, Etyen Mahçupyan

Moderator - Bejan Matur

We have heard Etyen Mahçupyan's, who has provided a critical approach to our topic. Now I will give the floor to Avila Kilmurray. Since 1975, Avila has lived in Belfast, but she was born in Dublin in the Republic of Ireland. She is an activist and also one of the first members of the trade unions in Ireland. She was also part of the Ireland Women's Coalition team, negotiating the Good Friday Agreement. I am sure she will provide us with valuable information. Thank you, Avila.

Speaker - Avila Kilmurray⁷

Thank you very much for the introduction and for the invitation from the Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation to speak today. As the chairperson said, I worked in Northern Ireland both during the conflict and as we came out of violence. While it is nice to hear people talking about an issue solved, I think perhaps that is going too far. I think in our case, we have come to a draw. But at least the situation is more positive than what we had for 30 years. During that period, I drew inspiration from two quotes by Albert Einstein. One was, 'Imagination is more important than knowledge.' I think in terms of conflict situations, this is particularly important because there is not just one type of knowledge; there is a kaleidoscope of knowledge depending on where you are located in a conflict. Imagination allows you to explore what type of feasible risk-taking civil society can engage in. The second quote is, 'You can't solve your problems with the thinking that caused them in the first place.' In other words, we have to have a paradigm change in our thinking if we are looking at coming out of conflict.

I want to share briefly a number of concrete examples of work carried out by different elements of civil society, both in the creation of the framework of peacebuilding (which came before our

⁷ Avila Kilmurray is the Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland, and is a founding member of the Foundations for Peace Network. She founded the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, women's movement and conflict transformation. A report on the contributions of civil society to conflict resolution in Northern Ireland produced by Avila is included as an annex.

ceasefire) and also in the care and maintenance of peacebuilding as we were coming out of violence. One of the things we learnt very early was that it is not a linear process. We had the main ceasefire in 1994. The IRA ceasefire broke down in 1995 with a series of shootings and bombings. The loyalist ceasefires broke down two or three times. It is important for civil society to stay with the peace process, not just when it is most comfortable but even through periods of crisis.

The first initiative that I would like to share with you was the importance of creating space for conversations. As early as 1992, we had a citizens inquiry called the Opsahl Inquiry⁸ which brought in local and international people. The idea was to take submissions from all sorts of people: individuals; churches; organisations; civil society; and from local communities, but most importantly from the representatives of paramilitary groups as well. In other words, it was creating the space for voices that had been demonised. For many years in Northern Ireland, we had a media ban on anyone that the government associated with being involved in violence. In fact, we had a cottage industry of actors that used to imitate their voices. The Opsahl Inquiry allowed for an exchange of views from all sorts of people, and that at least gave a sense of validity to those people who would have been seen as the extremists, who were at that stage looking for options out of the violent conflict. That was important.

⁸ The Opsahl Inquiry was a citizens' inquiry carried out between May 1992 and June 1993 by the Opsahl Commission. Its primary objective was to document ways forward for Northern Ireland in light of the conflict, as presented by citizens.

The other thing that was important during the years of conflict, which was referred to this morning, was organising groups around common themes, be it women's issues (which were a particularly powerful theme), trade unions, or teachers, in order that they came together around functional issues or shared concerns. We made sure that we were bringing them from all sides of divided communities so if they wanted to, they could have conversations on the fringes of meetings. You could not force a particular agenda but very often you could, over a period, build the confidence to share quandaries. When we were introducing the politics there, rather than asking individuals to express political positions, we would circulate blank cards and ask people to write down their hopes and fears. Then we would create an agenda so that no one individual was exposed as having shared something controversial, but nonetheless the controversial points were shared and could be talked about.

Another contribution was creating space through community organisations. In other words, we were always looking at what we could use to give people cover to make contact out of divided situations. For example in my own organisation, which is an independent charitable trust, we have always structured our board of trustees so that they are half from the republican Catholic community, half from the Protestant unionist community. This creates organisations which in themselves can structure an understanding of difference.

There was another very important initiative around the early 1990s, where a community based organisation employed ex-combatants and ex-prisoners from opposing views on issues of community development and regeneration issues. But actually, they were an effective backchannel negotiation because they could feed back to their respective paramilitary side. We were always thinking, ‘How can we use what is already there to give cover and open channels of communication?’ When we moved from that sort of indirect approach to a more direct intervention in the peace process, using the example of the women’s coalition, we did not draw up policies. Instead, we agreed on principles. There were three principles: human rights, respect for equality, and the importance of inclusion. We had two leaders, one from the Protestant and one from the Catholic community, and we proofed all issues of controversy through those principles.

It was very important during those early years of the peace process to recognise the importance of symbolism. The leaders of parties coming in from the outside needed to be able to send the message to their supporters that progress was possible outside the military structure. Before the ceasefires, a very important step was taken by the Irish president, Mary Robinson⁹, in going to a community event in west Belfast and shaking hands with Gerry Adams¹⁰. From the point of view of the British and Irish governments, she

9 Mary Robinson served as President of Ireland from 1990-1997.

10 Gerry Adams was the Member of Parliament for Belfast West from 1983-1992 and again from 1997-2011. He was President of Sinn Féin, the largest nationalist party and second-largest political party in Northern Ireland. Sinn Féin has historically been associated with the Provisional Irish Republican Army.

was meeting community activists, but to shake hands was very important. When the Irish American diaspora organised itself to convince Bill Clinton¹¹ to provide the IRA¹² with visas so that they could come and explain themselves to the diaspora, that also was very important, particularly on the Catholic nationalist side because the diaspora was very influential and could have held things back.



Speaker, Avila Kilmurray

Moving to the post ceasefire period, one of the big initiatives we had was called the G7¹³, a take on the G8¹⁴. It was seven organisations

11 Bill Clinton served as President of the United States from 1993-2001.

12 The Provisional Irish Republican Army is a paramilitary organisation seeking the separation of Northern Ireland from the United Kingdom in favour of a united Republic of Ireland. Although it decommissioned in 2005, it is an illegal organisation in the Republic of Ireland, and classified as a terrorist group in the UK.

13 The Irish Group of Seven (G7) was formed in 1996 by leading business organisations and businessmen in Northern Ireland. The group acted as an intermediary between the private sector and politicians, arguing for the economic benefits of peace.

14 The Group of Eight (G8) is a forum for the governments of the world's 8 wealthiest countries. Members include the UK, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the US, Canada, and Russia.

that came together: employers organisations; the institute of directors; the trade union movement; farmers organisations; and the ordinary council of action, they almost acted as the cheerleader of the process and did not intervene in the details. They said that we need peace, for economic development reasons; for social development reasons; and to create opportunities for disadvantaged communities. When the ceasefire broke down, they said to the politicians, ‘Do not panic, we need to keep our eye on the long-term goal, we need peace.’ When there were a number of very serious shootings and danger that the whole programme would fragment, the trade unions organised rallies as a means of diffusing popular anger and moving the process forward.

The other small thing that was also very important was that in the immediate ceasefire period, the BBC¹⁵ had a five minute slot every morning after the morning news. Without comment, each segment consisted of an individual explaining why they had been involved in the conflict, what the peace process was, and what it meant to them. You had republican prisoners; you had British army officers; you had a mother whose children had been shot. It was creating the political culture to say that change is possible.

The other role that CSOs played was to act as translators in terms of what was going on, because civil society itself comes from very different backgrounds. One of the things we quickly found was that in a large, drawn out conflict, people have their own

¹⁵ The British Broadcasting Corporation provides impartial public broadcasting in the United Kingdom.

narratives and they have conflicting narratives. I remember sitting with one group and asking, 'Why did the ceasefire break down?' They said, 'We sent out all these messages that the ceasefire was in danger. Nobody took it seriously and we couldn't control the IRA anymore.' I said that we had not seen any messages. Unless you were reading their internal bulletins, you would not see these messages. It was important that civil society organisations based in those communities could say, 'This is serious, it is not propaganda, this is actually serious.'

In a slightly different take on that, there is also the role of traditional civil society, especially at the community level, in stopping rumours because rumours can be damaging coming out of peace. If the media pick up on them, once they are headlines they become reality. There was actually a mobile phone network between activists who had links to the various paramilitary organisations so that they could debrief each other. When we heard there would be a bomb, the person they phoned could say, 'No, that's not true.' We were constantly trying to deescalate potential periods of trouble.

The other issue that was very important was the work taking place with victims of the violence and the political ex-prisoners. Because our conflict was never identified by the government as a war or a political struggle – it was qualified as an aggravated crime wave, the victims had a justifiable sense of being grieved because they had never been treated as victims of war. Yet you were in peace talks. Those politicians who were against the peace process very

quickly mobilised the victims. It was really important to try to invest in giving the victims a voice. For them, storytelling was really important. They generally felt that only certain historic instances would be remembered but the shooting of their son or daughter would not be remembered. The role of drama and the arts was important in taking an approach to sensitive issues in a less threatening way.

The political prisoners were crucial to actually allowing the peace process to go ahead. My organisation manages EU funds, about 30 million euro over a period, and we actually acted as the cut-out for government in terms of the political prisoners. We funded projects both inside the jails but also supported the paramilitary groups. We had five paramilitary groups and 30,000 ex-prisoners out of a population of about 1.5 million and they were concentrated in poor areas. We worked with them and they set up self-help groups because as was said, if there are no provisions for ex-prisoners, they could become a destabilising force. The groups and negotiators used their ex-prisoners to explain what was happening in the peace process because they had credibility.

Let me describe something which had contradictory effects at the time, but looking back was recognising the power of symbolism. In both nationalist republic and loyalist unionist areas, there were a whole set of war murals in recognition of combatants who had been killed in the troubles. At the time they said, 'They aren't leaving violence, they're glorifying it.' But actually it was important

because the groups involved were sending a message to their own supporters that their sacrifice was not in vain. Because the other danger is that you have an internal reaction within combatant groups towards the fact that you are now engaged in peace talks, but they question ‘What about my son or my daughter who made the ultimate sacrifice?’ It was giving a place to people but saying we are building on their sacrifice to move forward in another way.

As a community foundation, we funded some 3,000 community-based initiatives in the 1990s and early 2000s during the peace talks. The other thing we found useful was bringing in speakers from other conflict societies. In Northern Ireland, if I said something I would be seen as someone coming from Dublin and as nationalist Republican. Anyone is going to be seen as the community they come from. We use South Africa as an example a lot. People there could talk about how they changed and dealt with many of the issues we were facing. This was useful particularly when it came to decommissioning (meaning what to do with the arms), which became a make or break issue. We also drew from Nicaragua and Cambodia because you need a ‘menu’ of what works and what does not work and then you need to adapt it.

For us the negotiations started in 1996 and then we had the Agreement in 1998, almost exactly 15 years ago. The groups of CSOs used their expert knowledge to feed issues into the peace talks. We had people from the newly elected parties in talks, and they had such a plethora of constitutional issues to try to deal

with that there was a real danger that things like human rights, women's issues, issues of violence, and reconfiguring politics would be ignored. For the established negotiators from the British and Irish governments, their main interest was getting the guns out of politics. Human rights were on the side burner.

The human rights groups got together, they made briefing papers and they got them into the peace talks, and you had parties actually asking 'What are we going to put forward?' So they took it off the civil society 'wish list'. A big one for us was minority language issues. Again, the language groups got in what it was that they wanted. Not all of them were actually implemented but they do appear in the Good Friday Agreement and we are still now having a review. Going back to the importance of language, human rights came to be seen as a nationalist Republican demand so it was blocked by the unionist community. They talk about civil liberties and while there is not a huge amount in between, it has been enough to block our civil rights.

In conclusion, we have a whole range of things we tried and some worked, some did not. We did not wait for civil society to agree. Different sections of civil society moved forward at different times, but then where possible we had a platform of principles that civil society could establish consensus around. In terms of the interface with politics, clearly it is important that civil society does not try to usurp elected politicians because it will not work. We talked a lot about the tension and the complementarity between

participative democracy and representative democracy. Politicians were representative of the elected democracy, but civil society was representative of participative democracy. We talked about active citizenship as being less threatening. When we talked about politics, which we were involved in, we described ourselves as being involved in politics with a small 'p' rather than politics with a big 'P'. That kept people happy. I will conclude my presentation there.

Moderator - Bejan Matur

Thank you very much for your distinguished ideas and for sharing your experience. There are many striking points in what you said, and for all the organisations, institutions, and the government in Northern Ireland to make a declaration on the need for peace was very important. In Turkey, we need to raise our voices and make sure that they are consistently heard. You talked about creating a culture that would help you to be sustainable. For us, perhaps this means changing our language and understanding the paradigm better in order to support sustainability. Thank you very much.

Participant

As someone with 18 years of experience in NGOs, I would like to support what Etyen said about NGO participation and about being an actor in the process. I also believe that NGOs should criticise themselves and need to improve their communication with each other in order to create more synergy. We know that there has been an increase in NGOs and now there are a large number of them. But NGOs have some of their own problems. For example,

many have unchanged presidents for years and years. I think that perhaps NGOs need to address their own problems first, and then they should cooperate to find a solution to the conflict. As in the Ireland case, what we need is *cooperation* amongst NGOs. It has been said that everyone should start by reflecting inwards. First we will reflect upon ourselves, then we will revise our approach, our language, our attitude, and then we will cooperate with the other NGOs. Once we do these things, we can participate in the conflict resolution process.

Participant

Perhaps what I am about to say would have been more appropriate in the morning session about the role of NGOs in conflict resolution. Especially in our region, we have learned a lot of lessons from the process ongoing for the last 35 years. I come from the eastern part of Anatolia. Since 1993, especially in Ankara, I have attended activities and meetings. In recent times, I have been seeing a very rapid change in the Turkish political agenda and because of this, we as NGOs and media are affected.

Everyone seems to be asking ‘who is doing what?’ ‘Who is doing right or wrong?’ It seems that we are all confused. We are waiting because it seems like this process will never ever end. I think that we should try not to create any confusion; instead we should help the government. It seems like the government is gambling. Now, there is an understanding that we should wait and see what the government will do, and then we will choose whether to support

government decisions. This is the phase NGOs in the country are in.

Participant

Etyen Mahçupyan has said that NGOs should be self-critical. I agree with that. But as I have said in the previous session, we should first analyse the conflict environment, and after that, civil society structures should also be analysed to see if they are really civil or not. To be civil is very important for civil society's participation in the peace process. The CSOs should be unique and intellectual somehow. On the other hand, we want ideas to be expressed more explicitly; we require more mutual dialogue. Those are our wishes. However in a conflict environment, before the conflict starts or during a post-conflict phase, we should really analyse the situation to create an environment for a sustainable peace. For this reason, today's meeting is very important.



Ayşegül Doğan and Speaker Cengiz Çandar

Participant

Of course the peace process is very important because of the results. In order to have peace between the Turkish people and Kurdish people, we need to convince the Turkish people and we need to satisfy the Kurdish people. We see that the satisfaction of the Kurdish people is now lagging behind, because people are only concerned with convincing the Turkish people. Now, understandably, there are sensitivities because politicians are scared of losing votes. Here, all the NGOs that would like to participate in the peace process should do what the politicians do not do. As we are not worried about the vote, nor are we political parties, we should be braver. We should increase our voices because if the issue cannot realise the demands of the Kurdish people, then it will not be solved.

The villagers who live in eastern Anatolia will not accept the PKK giving up their weapons. They will not accept it because it will mean that the demands of the Kurdish people are now in the hands of the Turkish people. For this reason, when we consider which party is right and what lessons can be applied to the peace process, we should take the ones applicable to the situation of Turkey and start by defining the fundamental rights of all citizens.

We are discussing all the steps of the process, but we do not know when they will be realised. It is very important that the groups with guns leave the country. Now, the Prime Minister thinks that if he launches such a law, it will be problematic for him. Also, the Kurdish party remembers what happened in the past. They

say, 'Our guerrillas lost their lives on the mountains.' Recently, as NGOs, we are in a position of observation. We are watching the process, but there is also pressure for NGOs to participate. The Kurdish issue will be discussed from many perspectives. As NGOs, we should draw up a roadmap and follow this roadmap.

Moderator - Bejan Matur

One speaker has said, 'let us be watchful and then let us act' but other speakers are saying 'let us be very active and let us create the change'. Two people from the same region are saying two very different things.

Participant

There is an expression in the Kurdish language which says that we can kill an animal for different reasons. One person can kill for the leg and one can kill for the arm. People want the guerrillas to move to other countries, but we are not discussing a small number of people. There were 50,000 people who died in the conflict including civilians, guerrillas, and soldiers. Different people died but many of them were Kurdish people. The Kurdish people were kept in prison and left their own regions. They are now supposed to live in the western parts of the country or in the cities. The Kurdish Party (BDP) wants peace, but we do not want to lose our honour in the process. We are not trying to be radical or interrupt the process. Instead, we are afraid to be put in prison. If the PKK do not gain anything after they lay down their arms, then there will be the JKK or TKK, or something else. They want peace more than anyone else.

Participant

I would like to correct one thing. I agree, but let me clarify. There are two actors, Erdoğan and his team, and Öcalan and his friends. They are preparing the roadmap together and we only get to *observe* the process. Perhaps we need to wait a few months to see what will happen.

Participant

I would like to share an anecdote. We were on the bus and someone started singing a song. The lyrics were, ‘the guerrillas are killing the people, and blood is covering their hands.’ Someone asked him to sing a peaceful song instead. When we say ‘peace’, what does ‘peace’ mean? After they read the letter by Öcalan, I stepped down from the platform and I talked to a man who works in construction. He told me that his son is now in prison and that he was also tortured in prison in the 1970s. I asked him, ‘What do you understand of peace?’ He said that peace was something nice and good. After saying a few words he began crying because he was not satisfied with the letter from Öcalan.

In 1999 and in the 2013 situation, Öcalan published a celebratory letter. Let me tell you, the new letter and the old letter have almost the same sentences; he has not changed his way of saying things. Because the Kurdish people have high expectations of him, they are not satisfied. I think we understand that our being silent would not contribute to the peace process. People’s memories are extensive as we know. If we keep silent and do not talk, it will not resolve the issue, it will only make things worse. The journalists and the NGOs need to talk but for the benefit of peace.

Participant

I am also a person who has experience of this specific war. Let me add to what Etyen Mahçupyan has said. In his speech, he said that conflict is very important for the Turkish and Kurdish issue. Etyen Mahçupyan said that we can only solve what we describe as a 'conflict'. I think the problem in this is that the way to solve the conflict is directly related to how we *define* the conflict. In this case, maybe our definition should be more explicit or clearer. Perhaps we should find some mediums to explain it in better ways. For conflict resolution, we always talk about understanding peace, but what do we mean? We do not understand peace. I do not mean that in Kurdistan there is a different peace and in Istanbul there is another peace. Let us have a different approach.

Participant

I asked a man from the Kurdish student movement, 'What do you understand by *peace*?' He said he understood peace as freedom. If we are free, then there is peace.

Participant

We all say that we should learn to talk together in order to achieve peace. To do so, there should be mediators that will gather the parties and stakeholders together. We cannot expect this from the politicians. If we expect it from the political actors, then it will be in their control, instead of ours. I do not know who will do this. It might be NGOs, the media, or somebody else, but it is the responsibility of civil society. Such meetings are important. Let us

not think that these issues are being discussed behind closed doors, we can take the initiative to be part of the peace process. Why not do it in a visible way?

Many conferences are held in Istanbul. Do you remember conferences taking place in other cities? This type of conference should be held in all cities, not only Ankara and Istanbul. We are trying to be heard in the eastern side of Anatolia but we do not talk to each other. We do not talk with civil society in the eastern world. There was a question coming from the moderator, she said that the Kurdish people are confused. I do not think that they are confused. In such an environment, there is now a very strong possibility of peace. There are things that have been discussed for many years, but for the first time in history, the government has voiced itself. This is the risk that the government is taking.

I remember the Prime Minister was in the Netherlands, and the media seemed confused. I turned on the television, which connected to the Prime Minister live. He made a speech, but he did not mention Öcalan, nor did he call him the 'baby-killer'. I remember that the anchor woman said afterwards: Today the Prime Minister talked about the 'baby-killer'. This is the language used. I do not think there was a command coming from Öcalan. I read that letter as part of the peace process. You said that Kurdish people want to fill the terms of peace with sustainability, fairness, and justice, but they are already aware of this. They are mature enough for this peace. The disturbing thing is that especially

recently, we have only been talking about the responsibilities and sensitivities of one party, instead of looking at both sides.

Participant

On the contrary, you said that Kurdish people interpret peace with maturity but I do not think this is true because there is a war going on. People who live there and people who live here are different. I do not think that one side is more mature than the other. You cannot put this on their shoulders.

Participant

That is not what I am saying. I said that Kurdish people can fill the meaning of peace. They know what peace means and they are mature in their understanding of it. Let us wait and observe. We are not observing idiots. There are alternatives, especially after the 'Syria effect'.

Moderator - Bejan Matur

I believe this discussion has been very significant and that hearing the voice of the silent is very important. If you want to pick up this issue from this point on, we would like to give you the floor. Finally we would like to leave the floor to our two speakers. We had the question, 'What should NGOs do in this process?' Maybe this is something that you want to pay attention to. Apart from this, we have wise persons with us. We can leave the floor to them so that we can hear their opinions.

Participant

As I have said in the morning, the main purpose of this meeting is to consider what kinds of contributions civil society might make. In the second session, I was thinking it might be appropriate to think about the framework presented by Etyen Mahçupyan. But our second presenter opened the discussion on something that might be interesting to consider. Five or six days ago, a representative from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came and we chatted for hours in one of the hotels. He gave a presentation about the concept of a 'new Middle East'. What was interesting was that there are significant similarities between the framework that Mr Öcalan mentioned and the framework that Mr Etyen Mahçupyan drew.

Around the year 2000, Mr Öcalan said that the Kurdish people would respect the borders, but in terms of cultural issues they would become united through their CSOs. It is a kind of utopia that he envisaged. We are living in a Middle East where the borders, sects, religions, and conflicts are very intense. Is it possible to do such a thing? Is it possible to form a new Ottoman empire? Although it may be somewhat utopian, it is still good to dream about these things. People are attracted to this idea. Coming back to the issue, there is a discussion amongst the Kurdish people over what is happening. Are we being tricked or cheated through Öcalan? In a way, are they trying to move things? Are they trying to control the Kurdish armed movement? Or are they trying to liquidate it? There is serious discussion taking place but it is still occurring in private. The leader of the PKK said that they are convinced by the

new framework put forward by Mr Öcalan, but the middle levels of PKK management are not yet convinced by it. They are saying, 'We have been fighting for years and years and now you're saying that we need to stop?'

The last two years were a nightmare. Around 1,500 PKK militants lost their lives. According to reports though, it is only 517. Last year, the PKK felt that it had been fighting very hard and that it had brought this issue to a certain point, but it also had huge losses. At this point there is a new route. They are now facing a letter of withdrawal which has shaken-up both the PKK and the Kurdish people. There is discussion amongst the Kurdish people, but it has not been revealed what will happen, will it create a break or a crisis? The Kurdish people are somewhat self-confident; they are united in their will and in their emotions. They now feel that they are a presence in the Middle East. Now, even through peaceful methods, they believe they can defend and gain rights. This is their self-confidence.

From the perspective of Turkey, there is enthusiasm amongst the Kurdish people for democratic methods. They are more attracted to legal methods than illegal ones. They are using the ballot boxes and monitoring the election process. The 1999 process took years and years, and it was discussed inside and outside of the organisation. It found its path and now I believe that this current process will find its way as well. Through our own experience I can say that the PKK is a highly organised movement. It can accumulate strength easily

and reproduce itself with ease. For example, in 1999 it experienced a crisis but in 2004 it re-emerged as a guerrilla movement. I believe there will be an earthquake of ideas, but afterwards, this will lead to a peaceful solution, I am hopeful and I am optimistic.

Participant

Sometimes paradigm changes may create crises, but this is somewhat beyond our experience. The PKK states that yes, they have started a new process. The Kurdish people are very confident, they are committed to the PKK and they believe that the PKK will not leave them half way. If they do leave them, they are still confident that they can produce new solutions. As CSOs, how can we walk on this path? How can we penetrate a field which politics cannot penetrate? As CSOs, how do we influence this? How do we contribute? How are we going to realise our own mission? I think we should discuss not just what kind of solution methods there are, but the actual focus should be on how to facilitate this process.



Hamza Aktan and Kadri Salaz

Participant

I would like to salute you on behalf of the Human Rights Association. We spoke with Bejan Matur during the break and I said that since the morning we have been listening. We have been talking about the wise persons but nobody wonders, you, the wise persons, who are you? What do you eat? And what do you drink?

Old habits are still continuing. Civil society should be informed appropriately so it can avoid subjective evaluations. The news reports in the media and the reports on television are all subjective, and we cannot rely on such subjective ideas. We need to be monitoring the process ourselves and putting our feet on the ground. We need to be identifying human rights violations, and then preparing reports and telling the truth. We are not going to say, 'Let us not tell the truth for the sake of the process.' All CSOs should stick to their founding principles, which are very important for the process.

During the EU harmonisation process, there was government propaganda saying that torture is not widespread. But because of this propaganda, we are not able to appropriately struggle against torture. Many of the CSOs just allowed Turkey to start the EU harmonisation process, and denied that there is systematic torture, for the sake of EU harmonisation. What was the result? Torture is still going on in a systematic manner because of such propaganda.

The wise persons committee is a commission agreed to by the parties. It is not a one-sided step by the government, it was agreed

on during the negotiations with Mr Öcalan. The Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) made many suggestions, but in the end it was the Prime Minister and his team who selected the committee members. The Prime Minister said, 'I am undertaking the political risk therefore I have to determine the people.' After the Prime Minister's speech, the Prime Minister provided some answers to the wise persons' questions, which seemed to suffice.

The government is aware that it needs a new vocabulary. The committee of wise persons is meant to be independent, so that it is able to prepare its own agenda and form reports that would be considered by the government, as was declared by the Prime Minister. I believe the wise persons committee will be very effective. They will visit ten provinces where they will listen to people in order to understand what they think. We will express our own opinions and prepare our own reports, paying attention to social circles, minorities, and wide masses of people. We want to prepare a general 'big picture' regarding the opinions of society. After this report is prepared, the process will continue. The shortcomings surrounding the committee have already been underlined and expressed to the government. We hope that they will be addressed and new names announced.

Let me say the following: my personal observation is that we have to follow the process appropriately. It is not a new process. Let me give two examples regarding the role of Öcalan. One was the hunger strike; it was a limitless hunger strike but it was

ended after the call of Mr Öcalan. The second was the hostages. There were some demands by the HPG¹⁶ (the other name of the PKK) but when the leader of the movement gave an instruction, the PKK abandoned all their demands and returned the hostages. As CSOs, we have to follow this. The political parties might negotiate. They might step forward or backwards, but in terms of peacebuilding and getting rid of violence, we need to continue our efforts as CSOs and not leave this process behind.

Participant

I would like to thank DPI and the Berghof Foundation for organising such a meeting in such a critical period, as well as all the speakers. In both sessions, I learnt many useful things. If you allow me, I think that the title of ‘wise people’ is somewhat exaggerated. How this body was formed, I do not know. I do not know if there is agreement between the government and PKK and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). If they ask me, Mr Cengiz Çandar and Ms Bejan Matur should be part of this committee, as well as some other friends. But all in all, we have such a landscape. I do not know what kinds of things were experienced during the formation process of the committee, but this list of wise people might have been enriched.

This is the biggest problem for Turkey. For the first time, beyond mobilising the legal state institutions, the government is trying to mobilise civil society in order to solve a problem. They are

¹⁶ The Peoples’ Defence Force (HPG) is the armed wing of the PKK. It was formerly known as the Kurdistan National Liberation Army (ARGK).

somewhat newcomers to these issues. That is why we are going to face challenges. I wish this committee had been appointed with the duty of being a referee. I wish the wise people had the power to resolve situations of deadlock between the two parties. Since it is ongoing, maybe the committee can adapt in order to function like this. If it did, then wise people would carry a significant function. But as far as I can understand from the previous speaker, it seems that they are thinking, 'Let us see the beginning and we might have the necessary authority in the future.' What they want from us is to maintain public relations in various cities in western and eastern parts of Turkey, depending on the demands and needs of the process. We have to underline the fact that this peace process is not an action to divide the country or to oppress a certain segment of the population. We are trying to create unity within the country of Turkey. This is just one of the steps towards unity.

When the people who thought that you were sacrificing a sheep or a cow because of its meat do not see any meat on the table, they will ask, 'Why did we sacrifice this animal?' It is correct to say 'let us make peace', but what kind of peace? What would the difference be between 'Turkey at war' and 'Turkey at peace'? This should be addressed. It is very important that such mobilisation of civil society has taken place. Another important issue is that when we are talking about peace, we have to use the language and style of peace. We have to build sentences of peace in our speech.

Participant

It is very important to speak bravely about peace. In the speeches, both Etyen Mahçupyan and Avila Kilmurray mentioned the importance of politics. But at the end of her speech, Avila Kilmurray referred to politics with a small 'p'. We should deal with politics with a small 'p' and not politics with a big 'P'. It is clear that we are not going to get rid of politics; we are going to be involved in politics. But one of the gentlemen said in the first presentation that sustainability and sincerity are very important. It is possible that civil society's most important achievement might be that it will pay attention to the fact that there are real people involved and affected by politics. We have to emphasise the role of sincerity.

We need to look at the whole picture. We have been focussing on conflict resolution, but what about the post-conflict phase? It is not enough to focus only on the Kurdish issue when there are *many* conflicting societies within Turkey. When we work on this issue, we may need to start by talking about this issue in our own localities. I know we are very late in doing this, and it is an internal criticism that I make. Sometimes I left my neighbourhood by criticising heavily. It was wrong to destroy these bridges in my community by being overly critical. We have to go back to our own neighbourhoods and we have to talk about peace. It is not enough to put an end to the conflict; we also need to build the 'post-peace process'. Re-building bridges is an important element of this.



Speaker Avila Kilmurray and Tahir Elçi during the second session break.

Participant

While I was listening to Mr Etyen Mahçupyan, he said that we will solve the problem based on our description of the problem. Afterwards, we talked about what women expect from the process. We also talked about how we want peace and about the hunger strikes, which really affected our country and caused a big gap between both parties, so much so that we lost all hope about peace. Even some Turkish people felt that we lost Istanbul or Ankara or Izmir.

It seems like we are now in a serious situation for peace. After this peace process started, a survey found that the leftist parties are open to peace. The political parties cannot afford to risk this process, because now is a time when people are open to peace. There are friends who are not on the list of wise persons, like Mr Cengiz Çandar whose words should be written in gold. He is not on the list of wise persons, but I am sure he is just as wise. We have

many other people carrying valuable ideas, including NGOs and the employees of NGOs.

Altogether, we should do whatever is necessary. Politicians cannot risk abusing people's emotions and their desire for peace. They cannot say that it was not real or that it was a lie. We have already entered this phase and must complete it.

Participant

I would like to talk about conflict resolution. We talked mainly about the Kurdish people and recently we discussed whether the Kurdish side was satisfied or not. Those are all serious debates going on about the Kurdish side. I think the Kurdish people are more practical, they want the conflict resolved. Also I believe that in the search for democracy, the Kurdish people will be the strongest party, especially in terms of conflict resolution. Of course we are glad about the ceasefire. We are glad to learn about these expressions of goodwill, but on the other hand we see that freedom of the press is being walked over, especially in terms of conflict resolution and the fight for democracy. The Kurdish people keep asking those questions. I hope that there will be peace and in the case of peace, from Batman city I will keep asking about the Armenian Catholic School, for example. As a Kurdish person, I will keep questioning this, or the rights of other people. We will not stop after getting rights for the Kurdish people. Now that the Kurdish people are used to asking for rights and questioning things, they will not stop criticising other things. Society has

a lot of progress to make. It should not just be the wise persons involved because it is a problem that we are all responsible for.

Participant

I believe that we are able to do this. Let me give you an example, in 2011, there was a football game. The game was supposed to be held in the northern part of Turkey. The idea was to make a gesture, so we wanted to give flowers to the audience. Although the audience did not come, this type of practice was important to us.

As another example of how things are changing, a person came to carry out a conference. Years ago they would not have been allowed. I think with our partners, we can really collaborate and achieve some success. Let us also not forget that today the ruling party, which comes from a religious background, is not responsible for a problem that comes from the past. They are trying to solve a problem that they do not own. In the referendum we have seen the 'yes' at 82 per cent. If the vote is 'yes', then it will favour the Kurdish people. If it is no, then it will favour the Turkish people.

Participant

Civil society's role was touched upon but I do not believe that it can be put into practice. To me, all these ideas will just remain abstract, and no more meaningful than a conference. We should take an active effort to touch families and children, and the initiative should come from the NGOs working with these groups. I mentioned that we should also go beyond political willingness,

and actually carry out serious actions. The Ministry of Youth and Sport prepared an action project, but maybe the NGOs should do this instead.

People are over a certain age and you cannot erase their memories. They want the young people to grow up in a brotherhood environment. Ms Ayşe Betül Çelik has mentioned that we should enable socialising amongst groups. For example, we could gather Turkish and Kurdish singers together. We could hold concerts or create films or theatre to increase public interest and awareness. We could bring together NGOs working on the subject of art. On April 27, we will hold a constitution workshop together with the Civil Society Platform. Such conferences and actions should be done for the people; otherwise they will remain abstract ideas.

Participant

We see that there is the wise people committee, which will work very actively. There is one thing that I am curious about, when they work in the western parts of Turkey, the European local governance system is different from the rest of Turkey. The Turkish constitution addresses issues around children, the war, language and education. Because of this, there are many constitutional limitations to democracy, and articles intended to stop the rise of Kurdish people. As the Minister has said, if you have an advanced democracy then those things should be removed from the constitution. Our friends have applied to the European Human Rights Court. The laws and articles in the constitution, and the criminal and anti-terrorism

codes should be revised. This is a Turkish and Kurdish war, but the Kurdish people have not been part of the constitution. There should be constitutional changes involving both parties, and later, a discussion around the state structure of the city.

In 2004, a new law was enacted but it was rejected by the President. I believe one of the most important necessities is the transfer of power to local authorities. It is not possible to question or address the issues of the villages from Istanbul or Ankara. That would be my personal advice. The Prime Minister has said, 'I didn't meet with Öcalan, I only gave one interview to his friends.' It was perceived as though he was providing a favour to a prisoner. Our friends should change their discourse for the purpose of a contemporary country. They should share their thinking honestly with us.

Participant

This process has been discussed for a few months and what I have seen from the beginning is that there is a lack of real freedom of expression. As a Kurdish person, I am concerned with many things, but I cannot raise them because I am afraid. Also, I know that there are many Kurdish people that are scared of spoiling the process and that is the reason why they are silent. Will this be an issue of conflict resolution between PKK and the government? Or will it be a long term process that will bring peace?

There are some concerns which we should discuss, but there is not an open environment right now where we can discuss them. For

the last few years we have been critiquing the government about the Ergenekon case¹⁷ and many journalists were imprisoned for their criticism. It came to a point that whenever you criticised the government, you were deemed to be a supporter of Ergenekon. Because of this, many people are afraid of talking, but they should not be afraid if the process is going to be transparent. We should create a transparent and open culture for everyone to voice their opinions. The leadership of the media and NGOs will help to realise this aim.

The issue of conflict between the government and the PKK can easily be resolved. The two parties can reach an agreement, and the PKK can withdraw. However, if Turkish courts and Turkish nationalism continue to be present in the local governments or the ruling party, than these problems will continue with or without the PKK. I think that village courts should be removed. Also, over the last 30 years, the PKK has created a movement that exists beyond Turkey. It has ties to Kurdish people from Iran and Iraq who are part of their mission. Now Turkish Kurds are experiencing success through the mobilisation of Kurdish people from different countries including Syria, Iraq, and Iran. We should be addressing these regional linkages because even if the Kurdish problems are resolved in Turkey, the problems of the Iranian Kurdish people will

17 The Ergenekon case refers to an ongoing investigation against an alleged clandestine ultranationalist group seeking to overthrow the ruling AK Party. Ergenekon allegedly consists of elements of the military and police, terrorist or paramilitary groups, nongovernmental organizations, organized crime, journalists, politicians, judges, and government officials. The investigation began in 2007. There are currently 276 suspects on trial.

continue. As such, we should create bridges with NGOs in the Middle East.

The last point and maybe not the most important, is that Turkey National Radio and Television have been broadcasting some Turkish soap operas about military soldiers. These are broadcast every day and have very discriminatory language. They are very explicitly against the Kurds. I cannot believe that public broadcasting is able to do such a thing. If the ruling party is improving the wise persons committee but on the other hand broadcasting such television series, how can we trust their intentions?

Moderator - Bejan Matur

You said that your last point was not the most important, but in fact, it is very important. Those series are very discriminatory. I know that people are very affected by them.

Participant

April 2nd is a day that we celebrate. I see actors pretending that they are killing the Armenians as part of the celebration ceremonies. It is really ridiculous.

Moderator - Bejan Matur

There is a programme on television and I have seen how they use women and children to guard the village. Maybe our next speaker, as a wise person, can bring this issue to the government so that it can remove these series from television.



Speaker Etyen Mahçupyan, DPI Council of Experts Member and Moderator Bejan Matur, Speaker Avila Kilmurray

Speaker - Etyen Mahçupyan

You cannot say that there are no Armenians. There are some covert and secret Armenians and it is not possible to hide them. Because of the Turkish plan for the Turkish state, people are not ready to confront where they are from. Regarding the wise people issue, the reason behind it is that civil society is not supporting the process enough. The Union of Chambers of Commodity Exchanges and some other institutions thought that the CSOs would stand by this process. When it was not the case, they created an artificial civil society movement. In a few months there will be a real need for this, as there will be a constitution drafting process. Having civil society involved in this process will be useful for the government.

Wise people are being interviewed by journalists. The main politics, or big 'P' politics, are still going on but without the involvement of the journalists, no one knows what has taken place. Suddenly, ten

days later somebody might announce that there are no guerrillas left. The journalists can report on these advancements. Now, I would like to say something to our Kurdish friends on the issue of keeping silent. Those who keep silent take responsibility for being silent. If civil society wants to participate in politics, they have to take responsibility for their interventions. Whether they pay attention to this or not, they are still responsible for what they do and what they do not do. You should adjust your tone, but you have to speak out and participate.

There is a huge responsibility that belongs to Kurdish politics. The Kurdish people were victimised, and so the PKK remains an important actor. Politics means management - managing yourself and others. The Kurdish people will need to consider how to manage themselves in order to participate in politics. We should question whether we did right or wrong in the past. We have been talking about sacrifices, and maybe some of the sacrifices we have made were wrong. We have to be self-critical and recognise when this has been the case. If the PKK want to pursue a victory, then they will be responsible for the cost. They have to talk to their own society about peace and the Kurdish aims. Why was victory once the correct choice and now the correct choice is peace? It is the responsibility of the PKK and Kurdish people, whether politicians or civil society activists to discuss these things.

Speaker - Avila Kilmurray

I will pick up on some of the points raised in the discussion and

try to relate them to some of the experiences we had in Northern Ireland. First of all, we also had a broad range of civil society actors, but the most critical groups in terms of the peace process were neighbourhood groups and community-based organisations, and self-help groups of victims, ex-combatants, and ex-prisoners. As soon as the ceasefires were proclaimed, we circulated a simple questionnaire to hundreds of groups asking what they thought the priorities were: economic, social, environmental, or political. We did that on the basis of them being able to influence the reconstruction agenda and the peace process. We did it to give those local groups a sense of voice and ownership. As conferences like this were rolled out locally, we could get ideas from the grassroots, as well as getting ideas from the big organisations. That was really important to give people a sense of ownership. Because they did not need to put their name on a banner, they got over their fear of speaking out.

The thing we did not spend enough time doing was checking to make sure that neighbourhood groups were representing the poorest communities. In our case, the poor pro-British communities were actually the most inarticulate. The minority Catholic nationalist community, which would have been seen as the more oppressed community internationally, were very clear and articulate about what they wanted. The poor Protestant loyalist community was not so articulate. Because we did not get enough of their voice during the process, now these groups feel disengaged and as though they have lost out in the process. The result is that they are now undermining it.

The other thing that CSOs did was identify political pressure points that politicians would potentially lock horns on. The annual release of prisoners was a key example. A research project was undertaken by some of our NGO people and included going to South Africa; to Spain (which is probably not the best example); to the Red Brigades in Italy; and to the Middle East. They were looking at the pros and cons of early release of political prisoners and bringing them back, which was very controversial. The British government said this would never be on the agenda, but of course it was. From the politicians' point of view, it allowed a discussion in society that could not take place in mainstream politics, and later became part of the agreement. Similarly, what to do about policing was another issue that was quite sensitive in some of our communities.

This leads into to the whole issue of confidence building. We found that it is not useful to address the major political issues up front. Decommissioning of weapons nearly derailed our peace process, and that is why the IRA ceasefire broke down in 1995. We were going to get agreement about entering into a process but not on the basis of an ultimatum. We said, politically, nothing is agreed until everything is agreed. We essentially parked some of the controversial issues. We reworked our police force to include more Catholics. We gave this responsibility to a commission. Likewise, we gave one commission the responsibility for the early release of prisoners, and another the responsibility for decommissioning. One commission did not dissolve until 2010, showing how long it can take to complete the process. But to make any of those issues a

precondition would have derailed us completely. We picked on the smaller issues such as economic questions and the language issue to try to build confidence. That was particularly important as we were heading into elections. Elections were the bane of the peace process because everyone goes back into their boxes politically and takes hard line positions. We had to think, what can civil society do while the politicians are messing around? Once they came out of elections you could start the macro peace process again.

The other issue that was important, and was one of the things that sold our peace agreement, was recognition of a parity of aspiration. While the constitutional boundaries of Northern Ireland were agreed, there is still recognition of a parity of aspiration for Republicans to have a united Ireland, as long as they do not do it through violent means. Looking at social and economic issues that go outside constitutional borders are actually okay. Before our peace process, we often used the Council of Europe as a model to demonstrate broader cooperation across boundaries. We talked about an economic corridor. They tried to depoliticise issues that were actually quite political, but they could do it in the spirit that would benefit everybody. As such, we looked for 'win-win' situations. In terms of Irish people, there are millions more Irish people living outside Ireland than in it, including Irish-Americans and Irish-Australians. We were trying to disentangle nationalism, state, and cultural identity to make it more porous. We tried to say, rather than 'you have to say that you are Irish or British', you can say you are 'Irish-British' or 'Irish-American', or you are 'British', to

leave room for people's aspirations rather than saying that because you live here you have to all share the exact same culture and identity.

It was very important even during those dark periods for civil society to consider the 'post-peace process'. What is the longer-term goal, over and beyond a ceasefire? This meant trying to question how to reconceptualise politics irrespective of borders, in terms of how people live. The first thing we talked about was the demilitarisation of politics. We had the British state, the IRA which was militarised, all our other paramilitary groups, and loyalist groups that were militarised. The question was, 'How do we demilitarise politics and develop a baseline of rights for citizens irrespective of their cultural identity?' That was about human rights.

Finally, how do we create structures for active citizenship moving forward? We actually succeeded in establishing a civic forum in our agreement, which nominated representation from different sectors: from the labour movement; employers; from women's groups; from community groups; and educational groups. Unfortunately, it was the first thing that our new government ditched. I suppose one of the things I always remember was something a speaker from Peace Now in Israel said to us back in 1999, 'You got your agreement but do not lose sight of what is going to happen.' She was right. We did not do enough to protect the gains. The post-peace agreement phase needs to be planned from the start.

Moderator - Bejan Matur

Thank you very much. As I have been saying, and as exemplified in detail from our guests, disarming and ceasefires are just an entry point to discussing broader issues. The actual problems lie ahead. I would like to thank all the participants for their remarks.



*Gönül Karahanoğlu, Selçuk küpçük, Ayşegül Doğan,
DPI Council of Experts Member and Speaker Cengiz Çandar*

Closing Remarks - Cengiz Çandar¹⁸

Thank you to the Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation for an interesting discussion and fascinating presentations. You can learn about both organisations' activities from the hand-outs in your packs, as well as their websites, where DPI includes full records of all roundtable meetings. Despite some criticisms, DPI is a very transparent organisation. Regarding conflict resolution, they have visited London, Dublin, Belfast, and

¹⁸ Cengiz Çandar is a senior journalist and columnist for Radikal Daily News, expert on the Middle East, former war correspondent, and a DPI Council of Experts member. He served as special adviser to then Turkish president Turgut Özal and has published numerous books and articles on Iran, Palestine and the Middle East.

Wales to draw comparative examples. The records of these visits are on their website.

I would like to talk about the existing situation in Turkey, specifically regarding the Kurdish issue. During the comparative study visits hosted by DPI, we have always said to our hosts that when we are listening to them, we are thinking, 'How can we apply your lessons to Turkish issues?' We can be in Dublin, Cape Town, Sri Lanka, or the Philippines, but in the back of our minds we are trying to translate what we learn into the Kurdish issue in Turkey. This problem, which involves conflict, is ours. Never before have we had such high hopes for peace. Everyone is very optimistic now. The flowers of optimism are blossoming.

Since the morning, we have been talking about civil society, but first I would like to draw your attention to a couple of issues. Everyone is afraid of speaking out because they are worried they might harm the process. Because the process could lead to a solution and put an end to a period that was very bloody and complicated, we are trying to protect it from being harmed. I would like to make the connection between wise people and civil society. From the beginning, I have faced situations where everyone I talked with has asked me whether Mr Erdoğan is trying to trick us. 'Is it sincere?' 'Does it have to do with elections?' They ask this because we have two elections coming, and the Prime Minister is pursuing the presidency. There are general elections and local elections. People are wondering, 'Does it have something to do with these calculations?'

My opinion and answer is that this process has its own timing and is producing its own dynamics. This process is going beyond the original intent and is become independent of the intentions of its own creators. The process is taking its own creators hostage. It is irrelevant to try to test its sincerity because we will never know the actual intention of the Prime Minister. There are various interventions that have been derailed. There might have been election calculations, but there is such a dynamic, both in terms of the Kurdish political movement and Turkish political power, that now they do not want to risk interrupting the process. Instead, they must continue with it and try to produce solutions. One of these solutions is the wise persons committee. What Mr Erdoğan understood of the wise people and what others understood, is something different. They did not think of producing this solution at the beginning, this is a concept that was only just devised now. They did not have a plan where two months later they would organise a wise persons council. Instead, the dynamics of the process developed this. There is an expression of ‘the Turkish model.’ The Turkish and Kurdish people have their own style; they do not have the positivist tradition of Western civilisation. Our culture is that of, ‘Let us first start the work, and then we can take the necessary precautions on the way.’

What is the plan of Turkish rule? What plans does the Kurdish genius Öcalan have? All these questions play a role. This is a historical moment and as such, it is directing the process. The Kurdish people are very self-confident thanks to the developments

over the last 15 years. In northern Iraq there is an area called Kurdistan. It is troublesome to mention this concept in Turkey, but more or less there is an independent Kurdish state in Iraq. After the US invasion of Iraq, this region was consolidated and it took a constitutional form. For almost ten years, the Kurdish people have been ruling themselves. This is the democratic model, which is proof that the Kurdish people might govern themselves with their own assemblies, with their own security forces, and with their own armed forces. Apart from only being a project or a utopia, there is a concrete model to look to.

The developments in Syria have the potential to produce a similar result. By 2013 it will impossible for Turkey not to be influenced by these processes. Turkey has made claims of being one of the top ten economies. They are devising a new system and saying that Turkey will be a very wealthy country by 2030. For example, they are saying that they will have the power of presidency for ten years if they can win two consecutive elections. They are trying to devise a new constitution. It may be the case that Erdoğan will retire after being Prime Minister for ten years and President for another ten years. It is impossible to preserve old ways of thinking and walk towards such targets. The Prime Minister may be of the opinion that it is not possible to resolve these problems by resorting to old methods.



Speaker and DPI Council of Experts Member, Cengiz Çandar

As I said, the Kurdish people are very self-confident. Good or bad, we have a separate state in northern Iraq and we have a developing situation in Syria. The majority of Kurdish people are in Turkey and they have more than 20 Members of Parliament, which gives them confidence. It is possible that in the next elections, the Kurdish people will become partners in the government. The perspective of Öcalan is that the Kurdish political party will become a major party. They may even elect 50 or 60 members to the assembly. In a democratising country with a growing economy, Öcalan has a vision of the position of the Kurdish people. At the beginning of his speech he talked about forgiving one another and thousands of Kurdish people fell to the ground. For over 30 years we have been talking about 40,000 casualties, of which, 30,000 were PKK members. Öcalan did not 'kill all the babies' by his own hand; he is not a serial killer, this was part of a rebellion. He is the leader of a movement, in which 30,000 people have died.

Coming to this point, we can identify the following issue: in Etyen Mahçupyan's talk, he identified some problems regarding the current process. He discussed how the solution depends on our identification and definition of the problem. The government has defined this as an issue of terrorism. From this perspective, there is a terrorist organisation that created this conflict, and these members should leave the country and withdraw through any methods. It is possible that in a fortnight we are going to learn that there are no guerrillas in our borders.

There is no Kurdish problem. There are the problems of our Kurdish brothers and sisters and we are going to deal with them. The Kurdish people do not consider this to be an issue of terrorism. They do not consider the PKK to be a terrorist organisation, neither do the PKK. They are of the opinion that Kurdish people re-emerged at this stage of history, and that they are destined to have the recognition of their own state. This type of solution is based on their perception.

There is a huge gap between the landscape drawn by the official channels and the expectations of the Kurdish people. We talked about this at the beginning. Why was the sheep sacrificed, if not to eat its meat? According to official channels there is no meat, and this is what the wise people have been told to convince the public of. But if we turn back to the beginning of this process, the process is producing its own dynamics. These dynamics will direct the process and the process will advance. Actors on both sides should pay attention to the appropriateness of the process.

The most important issue is that of the constitution. Yesterday we looked at the Constitution Reconciliation Commission, where all parties presented their own draft. We have to pay attention to the Republican People's Party (CHP). From the perspective of the Kurdish issue, we are expecting this constitution to provide the legal framework for conflict resolution. The constitution will not bring a solution itself, but it will provide a framework for resolving the conflict. Two of the most important drafts were provided by the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), but the drafts are very different. For example, the Justice and Development Party (AK Party) refer to the 'Kurdish nation', but the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) refer to the 'Kurdish people'. When we look at other cases, we see that there are administrative structures for devolving powers. Spain has 17 autonomous regions and two autonomous cities. The ruling party is surprised when we talk about federalism or autonomy, because they are scared of being divided. The draft constitutions produced by the Justice & Democracy Party (AK Party) and the Peace & Democracy Party (BDP) currently cannot be harmonised, but they should.

One of the most important reasons the PKK leaders said that the PKK should lay down arms was that they expect there to be a new constitution, where the Kurdish people will find their own place. But if there is no bread for the Kurdish people inside the new constitution; if the Kurdish people cannot find a firm place within the constitution; if there are no legal changes, the Kurdish

people might give up the idea of sacrificing the sheep. The PKK is ready to make sacrifices, but they are hesitant because they think they may not receive the constitutional changes they desire.

We are talking about drafts. A draft is a draft, it is a fall-back position for both parties, whether the ruling party or the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). If there is existence of politics, I think the duty of NGOs is important. All of the big political ruling parties do the big 'P' and NGOs do the little one, but it is all politics, whether with a big 'P' or a little 'p'. On one side, we have the undersecretary who goes to an island to meet Öcalan. Afterwards, Öcalan writes a letter and then the letter is given to parliament and one goes to a European state. Next, a response comes. This kind of communication is a first for Turkish history. I spent a big portion of my life with a friend who now works in parliament with the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). Although they are a close friend, they never reveal any of the contents of the letter or messages from the island. Things are being spoken, but they are not shared publicly.

On the other hand, there are many who speak at the same time, like we do. There is a wise persons group, but what about their duties? There shall be the participation of NGOs, both in the beginning and in the end. We are hosting some of the wise people here today, what will they contribute? The Prime Minister separated seven regions and the wise persons were told to go to the regions and talk to the people. One called me and asked me for contacts. The reality

is that the wise persons will go to the NGOs and foundations in these regions. They cannot go anywhere else or talk to anybody else. Will the wise people just go and knock on doors and talk to people? No, they will probably visit NGOs and foundations, and local authorities.

DPI has published an interesting working paper on the mediator role of NGOs, which can be found in your conference packs today. Civil society is defined very clearly in this paper. In Turkey, if you are wearing a uniform, you are not 'civil society'. If you are not wearing a uniform, you are 'civil society'. CSOs are organisations that are independent of the government, and are able to audit the government if necessary. We have heard of the Northern Ireland experience and the role of the NGOs there, and the importance of NGOs for Northern Ireland as a whole. Trade unions are not NGOs. Trade unions protect the monetary rights of the workers from the employers. When we say NGOs, we really *do* mean non-governmental. They have the aim of participating in politics and monitoring the government. There is a function of being a mediator, and this is a role for NGOs, especially in areas of conflict.

The most problematic point in this process is that the government has control. In the 1940s, the Governor of Ankara was a fascist person and said that if there was a requirement of communism in the country, it could be done. The Turkish people might have a similar approach; if there is a solution for the Kurdish problem, we can find it and apply it. It is not the problem of one side or the

other side; it is *our* problem. Does the government think like us? The ruling party says that it can solve the Kurdish problem, but it is a problem that is 100 years old. One body or one organ cannot solve it. They can open the solution phase, but the solution can only come with the participation of everyone, including NGOs. There are two important leaders: one is the Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. The other is the leader of the PKK, Abdullah Öcalan, who has a life sentence in prison. These two are now engaging in a process with the mediators and messengers.

This process has created a lot of dynamics that people feel the need to be part of. The NGOs want to be part of the process and can play a constructive role. In terms of the mechanism we call ‘wise people’, maybe they can play a meaningful role by looking for NGOs active in those regions and inviting them to participate in the process. What we need to do is *talk*. This is what is going on in the regions. On the one hand, there are followers of Öcalan, and then there are some people who suspect they will get something, but below what they deserve. Also, there is a third party that does not want to damage the process.

The Prime Minister said, ‘I will drink the bottle of poison.’ Let us support this process. Speaking is very important, and the Kurdish and Turkish people alike should speak. Those managing the process will hear what is being said and they will take these views into account and bring us to peace. We are living in an historical moment and we are going forward towards a solution. We asked,

what is the solution? What is the meaning of the solution? This is why we need civil society. This is the start of a promising era. We will walk ahead and move forward with this process.

Thank you all for your participation today in what has been an extremely worthwhile discussion. I have enjoyed your contributions and have learned a lot from them. Thank you again to the Berghof Foundation and to the Democratic Progress Institute for facilitating this meeting.

Conclusion

The roundtable meeting held by the Democratic Progress Institute and the Berghof Foundation in Istanbul on the subject of the role of civil society in conflict resolution this April brought attention to numerous issues in this area, and facilitated valuable and engaged discussion. The day brought together many participants from civil society, including academics, activists, and journalists, as well as members of the recently established wise persons commission in Turkey. There was a large and varied turn out, with participants attending from diverse provinces within Turkey, in addition to Istanbul and Ankara. Throughout the day, presenters and participants discussed possible roles and responsibilities for CSOs related to the peace process; the relationship between civil society and the media; and current challenges hindering civil society's full participation in conflict resolution and possible solutions. Many examples were drawn upon, illustrating international lessons learned with important discussion surrounding their relevance to the Turkish context. On the whole, this roundtable was very successful and we hope the discussion that was generated provided useful insight into this important issue, and that it will continue to occur.

The Institute will continue to organise similar roundtable discussions, both in Turkey and abroad, and hopes to continue to collaborate with the Berghof Foundation on such activities. DPI and the Berghof Foundation thank all participants and contributors for their much-appreciated participation in this activity.

Appendix

Roundtable: Why Civil Society and Conflict Resolution? 6th April 2013, Istanbul

Participants from Turkey

- Neslihan Akbulut, Board of Directors Member, Women's Rights Organization against Discrimination (AK-DER)
- Ahmet Akgül, Head of International Strategic Analysis and Research Center (*USTAD*), Mardin
- Irfan Aktan, Freelance Journalist
- Prof Dr Cengiz Aktar, Columnist at *Taraf* Newspaper & Professor, Bahçeşehir University
- Mehmet Alpcan, Anatolia Platform
- Ateş İlyas Başsoy, Columnist, *Birgün Daily*
- Yavuz Baydar, News Ombudsman for *Sabah* Newspaper, İstanbul
- Ali Bayramoğlu, Journalist, Columnist and Political Commentator at *Yeni Şafak* Newspaper, İstanbul
- Ayhan Bilgen, Peace Activist, Human Rights Defender and Columnist for *Özgür Gündem* and *Evrensel* Newspapers,

Ankara

- Raci Bilici, Head of Human Rights Association, Diyarbakir Branch
- Cengiz Çandar, Journalist and Columnist, *Radikal* Newspaper
- Ayşe Betül Çelik, Professor, Sabancı University
- Murat Çiçek, President, Mazlumder, Batman Branch
- Aysegul Dogan, Programmer, İMC TV
- Nuşirevan Elçi, President, Şırnak Bar
- Tahir Elçi, Lawyer and Advocate, Diyarbakır Bar Association
- Esra Elmas, Senior Advisor, Democratic Progress Institute
- Mehmet Ali Eminoglu, Managing Editor at *Agos* & Published Writer by Hrant Dink Foundation
- Dilara Gerger, MA Student, Şehir University
- Gönül Karahanoğlu, Association for the Support and Training of Women Candidates
- Rober Koptaş, Editor in Chief, Armenian Weekly, *Agos*
- Selçuk Küpçük, Freelance Journalist, Ordu
- Etyen Mahçupyan, Journalist for *Zaman* Newspaper & Consultant for TESEV
- Bejan Matur, Author and Poet, İstanbul

- Nil Mutluer, PhD Candidate, Central European University
- Koray Özdil, Program Officer, TESEV
- Kadri Salaz, Former Presenter and Columnist, Chairman of VANGIAD
- Cafer Solgun, President, Yüzleşme Derneği
- Öztürk Türkdoğan, President, Turkish Human Rights Association
- Ahmet Faruk Ünsal, Chairperson, Mazlumder

Other Contributors

- Katharine Cornish, Assistant, Democratic Progress Institute
- Hans-Joachim Giessmann, Executive Director, Berghof Foundation
- Eleanor Johnson, Programme Manager, Democratic Progress Institute
- Avila Kilmurray, Director, Community Foundation for Northern Ireland
- Vanessa Prinz, Project Officer, Berghof Foundation
- Catriona Vine, Deputy Director, Democratic Progress Institute

A Pot Pourri of Civil Society Action for Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding¹⁹

Introduction

The ideas and suggestions for interventions by Civil Society organisations during periods of both violent conflict in contested societies and transition from violence, as during periods of peacebuilding and conflict transformation are drawn from experience in Northern Ireland. They can be adapted and modified given different circumstances and conditions, but they are based on a number of principles:-

- (i) The need to provide people at all levels of society – but particularly within those neighbourhoods; communities and regions most affected by violent conflict – with an opportunity to express their hopes, fears and experience.
- (ii) The need to create safe spaces for people to have their voices heard.
- (iii) The importance of hearing from often marginalised or silenced groups e.g. women; young people; minority groups within society, etc.
- (iv) The need to include the voices of people who were engaged/ suffered in the violence – victims/survivors of the violence;

¹⁹ This handbook was put together by Avila Kilmurray, one of the roundtable presenters.

political prisoners and their families; ex-combatants; displaced communities.

- (v) The importance of hearing from communities in their own words, art forms and languages.
- (vi) A recognition that both Civil Society NGOs/organisations and community-based organisations are diverse and have the right to express a diversity of views.

Many of these interventions are based on an understanding of the importance of connecting learning and action to listening as long-term violent conflict both causes silences through fear and reduces complexity to the artificial simplicity of ‘us’ and ‘them’ – the other.

These interventions – and other actions by Civil Society – can take place in the aftermath of ceasefires, but in a number of situations even where ceasefires break down as so often happens. In such situations it may be helpful to be mindful of what Gandhi says –

*“Keep your thoughts positive because your thoughts become your words.
Keep your words positive because your words become your behaviour.
Keep your behaviour positive because your behaviour becomes your habits.
Keep your habits positive because your habits become your values.
Keep your values positive because your values become your destiny.”*

This Handbook will present a number of Civil Society interventions in the following categories:-

- A Creating Space for Voice
- B Confidence Building through Local Action
- C Preventing the Spread of Rumour and Misinformation
- D Giving the Conflict a Human Face
- E Dealing with the Legacies of the Past
- F Human Rights – An Essential Baseline
- G Where are the Women?
- H Counting the Cost
- I Civic Participation

The Handbook will present some concluding remarks drawn from the case studies collated.

Avila Kilmurray

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2013

A: Creating Space for Voice

One of the first dynamics to happen during extended periods of violent conflict is the disappearance of complexity. The narrative of the conflict becomes simplified to ‘my side’ or ‘their side’. People are challenged as to whether they are supporters of ‘them’ or ‘us’. There is always the danger that individuals who are seen to break ranks with their own community/’side’ in the conflict are seen as

traitors – or even worse, collaborators. Over an extended period this sharp division can often result in conflicting narratives growing up as to the *raison d'être* of the conflict, as well as conflicting – and mutually exclusive, versions of the ‘truth’ of what has happened. This was exacerbated in Northern Ireland where communities were often living in single identity communities divided by 30 ft. high ‘peace walls’, and where there was a broadcasting ban placed on a number of organisations that the government decided were advocates of paramilitary violence. Consequently, in order to lay the grounds for a greater understanding and sharing of diverse views and experience a number of initiatives were developed.

The Citizens’ Inquiry 1992

A group of people from civil society and academia came together in 1991 – three years before the paramilitary ceasefires to plan an independent citizens’ inquiry into possible ways forward for Northern Ireland which was then stuck in a political impasse. Individuals and local groups/organisations would be invited to submit ideas and views, with the commission of inquiry being kept as open as possible so that no view would be excluded. A local Steering Group was set up which, in turn, identified 150 people from Northern Ireland and beyond to act as ‘patrons’ of the project. These people came from a wide variety of social, political, religious and sectoral backgrounds. The Steering Group and the patrons identified, in turn, seven eminent and knowledgeable members of the Commission of Inquiry. These included Professor Torkel Opsahl (Norway); Professor Pádraig O’Malley (USA); Professor

Ruth Lister (England); Lady Faulkner (Unionist Tradition – Northern Ireland); Dr Eric Gallagher (Protestant Clergyman – Northern Ireland); Eamonn Gallagher (Nationalist Tradition – Northern Ireland) and Professor Marianne Elliott (England). Funding was sourced from a number of independent charitable Trusts and Foundations and a small secretariat was set up.

Over a period of one year 29 public meetings were organised across Northern Ireland as well as in London (Britain) and Dublin (Republic of Ireland). Six confidential Focus Groups were held in communities that were on the front line of the conflict. A schools initiative was developed to ensure the voices of young people were heard. An invitation was issued to every prisoner held in prison in Northern Ireland to contribute their ideas. A number of confidential meetings were held with representatives of various political parties and groups. In the end some 554 written submissions were received from organisations – representing some 3,000 people. Outreach Workers interviewed people in local communities and there were a large number of oral submissions heard by the Commission of Inquiry at their Open Hearings. The material was published and disseminated in A Citizens' Inquiry Report which was widely circulated. The material was grouped under the four themes of (i) Politics and Constitutional Issues; (ii) Law, Justice and Security; (iii) The Economy and Society; and (iv) Culture, Religion, Identity and Education. As part of the exercise the Commission had contacts with both republican and loyalist paramilitary organisations and the state security forces. The

main emphasis remained on opening up space for discussion and reflecting – as far as possible – the full range of views.

Beyond Hate Conference

An example of a more locally-based initiative to create space for discussion was the Derry organised ‘Beyond Hate’ conference which again was organised in 1992, before the ceasefires of 1994. The official title was ‘Beyond Hate: Living with our Deepest Differences’, which was held in the Derry City Guildhall, with participants from twenty five countries. A range of international speakers – who contributed both in person and through message – described how they had moved beyond hate. This included contributions from South Africa, the Middle East, the Balkans the USA and Cambodia. The local audience, which included the full range of political opinions, then discussed how the views expressed were relevant to their situation in Northern Ireland. The conference contributions were published in a report which was circulated to local groups in the hope that it would provoke further reflection and discussion.

Community Foundation for Northern Ireland – Space for Discussion

The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland is an independent, charitable grant-making Foundation, but also acted as a Managing Agent for European Union (EU) PEACE Programme funds over the period 1995-2008. Many of the community-based organisations and initiatives that it was funding were primarily

working in single identity either Catholic/Nationalist/Republican or Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist areas. To bring these groups together to examine issues that related directly to the ongoing peace process, the Community Foundation took the initiative to organise a series of 2-3 day conferences. The residential nature of these gatherings allowed people from different communities and backgrounds to meet together and to get to know one another. Speakers from other societies emerging from conflict were invited to share their experiences of what had worked and what proved to be problematic. Issues covered included the Protection of Rights; New Approaches to Governance; Provision for Victims/Survivors of the Violence; Supporting Political Change; Crafting Strategies for a Shared Future – and many others. In addition to the residential conferences a series of regional conflict transformation seminars were held across Northern Ireland, facilitated by a South African speaker with the aim of exploring the hopes and fears of social and community activists. Very often these activities were organised to coincide with periods of tension and uncertainty in the peace process.

A range of different organisations from civil society organised similar networking events on specific themes – from how the conflict affected young people to the importance of peace for economic development.

B: Confidence Building through Local Action

It has often been pointed out in Northern Ireland that local combatants on various sides in the conflict did not come down from the mountains at night, and then disappeared again in the morning, they lived next door to you (with the exception of the British Army that were deployed). Consequently, local community initiatives could often include activists that were either involved with, or close to, combatants and related organisations. This fact could be used to build cross-community confidence and networking both in the years of the violence and the period of transition.

Inter-Action Belfast (previously the Springfield Inter-Community Development Project)

Located in the flashpoint interface area of the Springfield Road in West Belfast this organisation was established before the 1994 ceasefires. It worked from three different locations, one Protestant/Unionist/Loyalist; one Catholic/Nationalist/Republican and one on the interface itself. It had a Standing Conference which drew in people from both sides of the interface and a Steering Group that had a representation of activists from both sides of the divided society. It employed political ex-prisoners; one a Republican and one a Loyalist. The initiative placed a heavy emphasis on winning, and maintaining, local participation, but it worked on issues of concern to local people, such as area regeneration; unemployment etc. It also linked up with an Adult Education Centre to offer community leadership training to local people. The early objectives of Inter-

Action Belfast were outlined as (i) a belief in inclusive dialogue; (ii) recognition of the role of political parties and government in decision-making about interface areas; (iii) importance of economic investment in community initiatives; (iv) work on inter-community cultural initiatives and community-based single identity projects; and (v) work to reduce sectarianism through issues of common community concern and single identity work. This recognised that there was a continuum between community development, community relations and conflict transformation. The building of trust and confidence through a working relationship also enabled the political ex-prisoners employed on the project to feedback information to their respective combatant organisation, which in turn encouraged the latter to engage in some exploratory dialogue about the potential for a peace process. In this case community development provided a baseline for early political development.

Community Restorative Justice

In 1996 a NGO NIACRO (Northern Ireland Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders) invited a number of political ex-prisoners to work with two NIACRO officers to research alternatives to the violent attacks that had been a feature of the various paramilitary groups policing their own communities over many years. The victims of the kneecappings, beatings and expulsions that were adopted, were those individuals (mainly young men) that were accused of ‘anti-social behaviour’, and/or collusion with the state security forces. Police were not acceptable in many local communities as they were seen as an arm of the

state. A number of seminars and conferences were held to talk through various ‘informal justice’ approaches that were non-violent in approach and rooted in human rights principles. Those that were involved in these discussions included a number of individuals that were members of the paramilitary punishment squads. The alternate approach accepted was that of mediation and community-based restorative justice – bringing the victims and the perpetrators together to provide an opportunity for the victim to be heard about the consequences of the harm, and to agree about what needs to be done to heal. Alongside this, where it is clear that the perpetrator has specific needs (e.g. drug/alcohol addiction; lack of personal support etc.) intensive programmes are put in place to work with them. For many years these Community Restorative Justice projects have worked outside of the policing structures, although with the progress of the peace process this is currently less the case. However there still are a small number of restorative justice projects that refuse to have any contact with the Police Service Northern Ireland, reflecting the political views of the groups that they work with. Community Restorative Justice has developed projects in both Loyalist and Republican communities.

Creating Space for Learning and Sharing

Creating Space for Learning and Sharing is an initiative of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland which recognises that encouraging local communities to take the risk of meeting up, and working in partnership with, communities from ‘the other’ side is not always easy. The challenges for CSLSP (Creating

Space for Learning and Sharing Programme) is to ensure that local groups are supported to identify peacebuilding and conflict transformation issues that could impact in a positive manner on the wider range of activities and services that community-based groups were already involved in delivering in their own areas. The Community Foundation for Northern Ireland approached a list of groups on both sides of the sectarian divide who had either struggled to engage in peacebuilding and cross-community contact work, or who had simply not considered it a priority. The Community Foundation also recruited a team of Mentors who had experience in working with local communities and in facilitating discussion on contentious issues. Groups that agreed to participate in the CSLSP were provided with both Mentor support and a small grant of £2,500 to implement a local Peacebuilding Action Plan which they drew up with the mentor support. When trust and confidence was built, groups from different identity/political backgrounds were then encouraged to meet/network with each other, to share experiences and discuss differences and divisions in order to learn from one another; to identify shared issues and to build their capacity to undertake reconciliation work. This proved to be a popular programme as single identity groups could rely on the mentor to offer a 'challenge function' of encouraging local participants to tackle issues and questions they may not otherwise have been willing to address; it provided groups with space for reflection; it introduced them to people working on similar issues in communities of a different political identity; and it provided them with a small amount of funding to implement their own

Peacebuilding Action Plan.

C: Preventing the Spread of Rumour and Misinformation

There is nothing better in aggravating violence and fear than misinformed rumour which suggests that there will be a violent attack, or a conspiracy from ‘the other side’. This is particularly the case where single identity communities are physically divided from one another and when their sources of information are divided as well. In Northern Ireland local single identity communities often read different newspapers and listen to different sets of political parties. However it is worth mapping what are the main sources of information that might be accepted in common.

In the aftermath of the 1994 ceasefires, BBC Radio (Northern Ireland) did a very useful exercise of broadcasting a 5-minute story of an individual who had been affected in some way by the violence. This was broadcast immediately after the main morning news report; it was broadcast without comment; and the individual stories were drawn from all sides of the conflict. This was a very effective use of media to make the point that the political violence had been experienced across the whole of society in Northern Ireland and not just by one particular community.

Community Dialogue

This was a NGO initiative to present information within local communities about what was happening in the ongoing peace process. As most of the peace talks were taking place behind

closed doors, local communities were dependent on ‘their’ political representatives for feedback. They were also often fearful about what was happening. Community Dialogue was a group of activists, drawn from both sides of the community divide, who prepared a number of simply written Information Sheets and Pamphlets. These contained up-to-date information about what was happening in the peace process and presented summary points of any political agreements made. The written information was supplemented by community meetings and discussions.

The Mobile Phone Network

Given that local communities in urban areas of Northern Ireland are so often physically divided by very high ‘peace walls’ there was a concern that the lack of contact between community activists could allow rumours to flourish. In some cases this gave rise to misinformation and fears as in the case where a large group of young men were reported as gathering and moving in the direction of an interface or peace wall in one single identity community, which resulted in young men on the other side of the wall mobilising to stave off a feared attack. However it turned out that actually the first group were only returning home from a football match. As a result of this it was decided to create a network of community activists working on the community interfaces and to issue them with mobile telephones. This allowed them to contact each other to check out rumours during times of tension. The timely clarification of issues could then be reported back to the local community leaders, and could serve to alleviate and/or prevent

possible violence. The mobile phone holders were then brought together to meet on a monthly – or more frequent basis. Any issues of contention were raised and discussed. In many cases the mobile phone activists were themselves ex-combatants/political ex-prisoners from both sides of the conflict.

D: Giving the Conflict a Human Face

While a protracted violent conflict affects all aspects of society, there are a number of groups and communities that invariably bear a disproportionate impact of the violence. Two of these are the victims/survivors of violence – i.e. those that have been bereaved or/and injured in the conflict – and another group are political ex-prisoners. Clearly ex-prisoners can also be victims/ survivors of the conflict, and then there is the broader group of ex-combatants. The challenge of humanising the casualties of conflict is particularly important in seeking to effectively reintegrate these individuals and families into a society emerging from violence, but also to facilitate them in accepting political compromises and agreements.

The Listening Ear Service

A number of self-help Victims/Survivor groups – representing people from all sides of the conflict developed Listening Ear services. This involves training people (often volunteers to act as a ‘listening ear’ for people³ who have been bereaved or injured in the conflict. The service entails listening not giving advice. The volunteers have to make application to become ‘listening ears’, and also to provide references. Training is provided in how to carry out

this role and the critical importance of confidentiality is stressed. A support centre for the volunteers is put in place so that they can be both supported and supervised on a regular basis. This approach is rooted in the recognition that many victims/survivors did not have space to speak about their hurt/anger over years of violence and it is a non-medical and non-judgemental response to meeting this need.

Counselling and Personal Development

A number of Counselling and Personal Development Centres were established to provide counselling and psychotherapy services to victims/ survivors of the conflict, as well as to ex-combatants. In the case of these services it is crucial that accepted quality standards are in place and adequate training, support and supervision. People availing of the services not only receive counselling, but also can benefit from stress/anxiety management techniques. Centres have also offered a range of alternative therapies to relieve stress – e.g. music therapy; art work; reflexology; reiki; aromatherapy etc. In the case of ex-combatants it was found that self-help groups had to get their own counsellors trained as the law in Northern Ireland required registered counsellors to report any crimes that clients admitted to the police. This was not appropriate to an ex-combatant client group in a society emerging from violent conflict.

The Importance of Story Telling

Both Victims/Survivor groups and political ex-prisoner groups speak of the importance of telling individual and collective stories

of how people became involved in the conflict and what impact the violence had on themselves, their families and their community. This is one of the best ways to humanise the cost of the conflict rather than always talking in terms of the statistics. However it is important to have clear procedures in place with regard to the ownership, use and storage of the stories. A number of approaches have been used to facilitate people's involvement in the story telling process – such as art work; drama and the crafting of patchwork quilts. In this case the family member who had been bereaved made a patch for the quilt which contained something that represented the lost loved one (e.g. a piece of material from a wedding dress; football shirt etc.). The quilt was then sewn together. The main benefit experienced was the stories shared by the Victims/Survivors while they made their quilt patch. Again, it is important to remember that encouraging people to tell their story can give rise to feelings of hurt and anger that will then need to be supported and addressed.

Political Ex-Prisoners Support Reintegration

It is not unusual for political ex-prisoners to have experienced long terms of imprisonment; this can leave them with difficulties in reintegrating into their communities, but also in rebuilding relationships with their families. As a consequence of this a number of Political Ex-Prisoner Support Centres were opened in Northern Ireland to provide advice, support and to act as a focus for mutual assistance. In the vast majority of cases these Centres are managed by representatives of the particular political grouping

that the ex-prisoner was associated with. However, as a funder of this work, the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland has brought the majority of the political ex-prisoner Centres together into a Prison to Peace Partnership. The groups that make up this partnership are drawn from 5 different paramilitary organisations. They identify and select issues that they will agree to act together on, while retaining the autonomy of their own Support Centres. In recent years they have worked collectively on an Education Pack for Schools (DVD and curriculum materials) explaining to young people why they got caught up in violence; what was it like in prison; and why they now support the peace process. The Prison to Peace Partnership also gives the various organisations the ability to debrief each other during periods of tension.

The Use of the Arts

The arts, in various forms, have been used to both humanise and interrogate the conflict in Northern Ireland. Neighbourhood Open Workshop developed an early 'The Barricades Project' where a group of teenage Protestant girls from one community made a video/DVD of an imagined encounter with a Catholic girl from a nearby area. The second stage of the project brought the participants together with a group of girls from the neighbouring estate. Collectively they devised a play about their shared experience and perceptions. Local community-based Theatre Groups have written and performed dramas reflecting interpretations of the conflict, often drawing the cast of actors from those communities affected by the conflict, and debates and discussions with the

audience have been encouraged after the play. The Playhouse in Derry has particular experience in the production of drama that reflects on the conflict. At a community level, local Festivals have woven together a combination of celebration, music, the arts, together with staging debates and discussions that can reflect the views of ‘the other side’.

E: Dealing with the Legacies of the Past

Dealing with the past, where the causes and nature of the conflict remains contested, is an ongoing challenge in Northern Ireland. This is invariably true of many violent conflicts where one person’s ‘freedom fighter’ can be another person’s ‘terrorist’ – or in the case of the British Government in Northern Ireland ‘criminal’. Although an independent cross-community Commission was established to look at how the legacies of the past might be addressed in Northern Ireland, no agreement was arrived at concerning its recommendations. There have, however, been a number of voluntary initiatives.

Healing through Remembering

Healing through Remembering is a cross-community organisation made up of a range of individuals and groups, holding different political perspectives, but committed to working on the common goal of how to deal with the legacy of the past as it relates to the conflict in, and about, Northern Ireland. When it was established it undertook a wide public consultation on how people wanted to remember the past, with ads placed in 56 local newspapers; 5,000

leaflets distributed and over 400 organisations contacted. On the basis of feedback a number of themes were identified for further work – (i) A network of commemoration and remembering projects; (ii) Establishing a Day of Reflection; (iii) Collective story-telling and archiving process; (iv) the development of a permanent Living Memorial Museum; and (v) Dealing with the acknowledgement of the past and the need for truth. The last theme has proved to be the most difficult, but the work continues. Healing through Remembering offers workshops and sponsors exhibitions and discussions on aspects of the past.

Truth Telling from Below

The Ardoyne Commemoration Project was a community-based truth-telling initiative that was carried out with, and by, people in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast. This small Catholic/Nationalist/Republican area recorded and published the testimonies of the relatives and friends of the 99 victims from Ardoyne who died as a result of the conflict between 1969-1998. The book that was published, with the help of two academics, tells the story of a 'hidden history'. Many local people were involved in the interviews, database collation, transcribing, proof-reading and other tasks that the project required. While time consuming this provided the local community with a sense of ownership, as well as enhancing the skills of local people. Many of the families interviewed during the course of this project remarked how they had felt isolated over the years of

the conflict. The project meetings were an informal way of bringing people together in order to share information in a supportive environment. The Ardoyne Commemoration Project Committee was made up of representatives from community groups, victims' organisations, ex-prisoners, victims and community activists. This local sense of participation gave the project legitimacy in the eyes of the community.

F: Human Rights – An Essential Baseline

Respect for human rights is often an early victim of a violent conflict and yet international standards demand that human rights should be respected both during a conflict as well as in the period of transition to a peaceful society. Concern over issues of human rights has been most frequently expressed in Northern Ireland through the work of NGOs (Non-Governmental Organisations).

Committee on the Administration of Justice (CAJ)

CAJ is an independent human rights organisation with cross-community membership in Northern Ireland and beyond. It was established in 1981 and lobbies and campaigns on a broad range of human rights issues. CAJ is committed to ensuring that the Government complies with its obligations in international law. To this end it researches and publishes reports on aspects of human rights abuses. It makes submissions on aspects of legislation and policies. It also provides information, advice, and, where appropriate, representation to victims (or potential victims) of human rights abuses in Northern Ireland as well as monitoring the

handling of past human rights abuses. CAJ provides human rights training to a wide range of organisations.

The Human Rights Consortium

The Human Rights Consortium was established in 2000 to encourage widespread community support for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. It is a campaigning organisation that draws its support from a wide ranging membership which includes individuals, Trade Unions, community organisations and NGOs. It promotes dialogue and discussion about the Bill of Rights (which was promised under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement 1998) with wider society.

G: Where are the Women?

A study by the University of Ulster (2010) screened 585 peace agreements, signed between 1990 and 2010, concluded that only 16% of these agreements contained a reference to women. That same year (2010) the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) noted that women make up less than 10% of negotiators and less than 3% of the signatories to peace agreements. So where are the women?

In Northern Ireland a number of interventions were taken by women within NGOs and community-based organisations.

Women's Information Group

This was a network of locally-based Women's Groups throughout

the greater Belfast area. Starting in 1981, they continued to meet one day a month throughout the years of conflict and into the years of the peace process. Initially they met in a 'neutral' downtown venue. Then they agreed to rotate their meetings in their 'own' communities and then visiting communities of 'the other side'. Transport, childcare and lunch was provided. They identified subjects of interest that they wanted to talk about e.g. cost of school uniforms; health issues etc. Generally these were not issues that addressed the major political controversies. The aim of the Women's Information Group was to build the confidence of the women involved; to hear their concerns and to break down sectarian stereotypes of 'the other' community.

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

When elections to the Peace Talks were announced in 1996, a number of women from Civil Society came together with the concern that the voices of women would not be represented during the negotiations. It was recognised that there were female members of existing political parties, but notwithstanding this it was felt that these parties were still male dominated. The Northern Ireland Women's Coalition was set up as a result of two meetings of women drawn from various organisations in Civil Societies. It organised its successful election campaign over a 6-week period and financed the campaign with £25,000 that it raised both locally and internationally. Rather than draw up detailed policies, it adopted 3 principles – Equality; Human Rights; Inclusion – that it used to bring together a platform of women from all sides of the divided

community. It had two leaders – one from each of the two main traditions. The single focus of the Northern Ireland Women’s Coalition was the peace process. It took the decision to dissolve itself in 2004.

Northern Ireland Women’s Aid Federation

The Women’s Aid organisation operates a number of refuges for women who are victims/survivors of domestic violence. They report an increase in the demand for their services when the conflict related violence ends. Although Northern Ireland did not experience the specific conflict related sexual violence that has happened in many wars, it did report an increase in the reports of domestic violence. This is a common factor in the aftermath to violent conflict.

Women’s Resource and Development Agency

WRDA is a regional women’s organisation whose vision is “of a society where women are confident, valued and respected and occupy visible positions of power and influence in all area of life.” WRDA ran a Women and Conflict project which worked on the basis that women have very distinctive and diverse experiences of conflict, including those associated with organising and sustaining family life during violence. The project included a series of meetings and Workshops held in a wide range of geographical areas which were facilitated to encourage women to talk about their experiences of living through violence. The initial round of Workshops was held with women who shared the same/or similar single community

identity. The second phase of the work was to explore the extent of the commonality that was found between the different groups. This then led to a specific Workshop on the potential for Good Relations between women on a cross-community basis. A report was produced on the outcomes of the work, which is currently being followed up (2012/2014) with an updated Women and Peacebuilding: Sharing the Learning project supported by the EU PEACE III programme.

H: Counting the Cost

One of the hidden aspects of the conflict in Northern Ireland was the actual cost in terms of the impact on people's lives. At regular intervals the direct economic costs of bomb damage and keeping soldiers on the streets would be reported, but because the British Government version was that Northern Ireland was essentially a normal society that was experiencing an aggravated crime wave – the cost in terms of the numbers of politically motivated ex-prisoners and the number of victims of the conflict often went unrecorded. This became a major challenge when programmes were being put in place to address the consequences of the conflict.

The Cost of the Troubles Study

An early stage was carried out by a number of community-based academics immediately after the 1998 ceasefires to count the cost of the 'Troubles'. It totalled up statistics of who killed who, and where. This allowed for a greater targeting of resources to those areas and groups that had suffered the worst effects of the violence.

In addition it introduced a greater awareness of the complex impact of violence, for example where it became evident that there had been killings within single identity communities as well as between them.

The Impact of Political Conflict on Children in Northern Ireland

A second study was carried out to detail the specific impact of the conflict on children and young people. It was established that there had been a disproportionate impact on those aged 24 years and under; they accounted for some 40% of the total number of deaths. An analysis of the deaths by religion was also carried out as well as by area. In addition, interviews were conducted which highlighted the mental distress caused to children/young people who had known someone killed in the Troubles related violence or who had witnessed someone they knew being attacked. The adverse educational impact was also considered.

Participation

At various stages of both violent conflict and peacebuilding individuals and organisations within civic society can play an important role. Northern Ireland had cases where both connected individuals acted as a mechanism for back-channel communication between the various protagonists in the conflict – suggesting scenarios; clarifying points of interpretation; and relaying messages. In addition there were organisations that created the space for informal dialogue between the representatives of combatant groups.

However there were also some more formal initiatives.

The G7 Initiative

In the aftermath of the 1994 ceasefires the Northern Ireland branch of the CBI (Confederation of British Industry) published a document 'Peace – a challenging new era' which looked at how peace might help to encourage economic growth, and how economic growth would help to consolidate the peace process. This led to discussions about how organisations in civic society could join together to present an economic rationale for peace. The Group of 7 was created which included the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce; the CBI; the Institute of Directors; the Ulster Farmers' Union; the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (Northern Ireland Committee); the Northern Ireland Association of Agricultural Producers (NIAPA) and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA).

The G7 group acted as a cheer leader for the peace process with the Irish Congress of Trade Unions calling public rallies in protest at any breakdown in the ceasefire arrangements. The G7 group also endorsed a set of Guidelines related to how companies should screen themselves when they are working in a divided society. These included

Has your business...

1. A thorough knowledge of how it is perceived in both main communities in Northern Ireland?

2. Evaluated the business costs/benefits of this image?
3. Decided whether this image is one it should have in order to be most profitable?
4. Considered to what extent the business and its staff are actively involved in the community at present, formally and informally, e.g. in schools, community organisations, charities?
5. Ensured that the appropriate balance of active involvement in the two communities is maintained?
6. Planned its future community involvement to ensure that it creates the image in local communities which it wishes to have?
7. Made an unequivocal commitment to being anti-sectarian in its community involvement?
8. Clearly communicated its anti-sectarianism to all staff?
9. Senior staff who consistently model good anti-sectarian practice in their work-related community involvement?

This group continued to meet throughout the 1990s.

Civic Forum

The Civic Forum is a consultative body provided for under the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement. While it had no legislative or governmental powers it consisted of members of various civic organisations, with representatives from the following:

- Arts and Sports (4)
- Culture (4)
- Churches (5)

- Employers' Bodies (7)
- The Trade Union Movement (7)
- Agriculture and Fisheries (3)
- Community relations Interests (2)
- Victims of Terrorism (2)
- Voluntary and Community Sectors (18)

There were an additional 3 nominees by the First Minister and 3 by the Deputy First Minister. Nominations from the Voluntary and Community sectors were managed by the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action and, in turn, included representation of women; young people; rights groups etc. The Civic Forum was set up in 2000, but was suspended in 2002, when the Northern Ireland Assembly collapsed. There is an ongoing debate over its reinstatement. In April 2013 the Northern Ireland Assembly voted to re-call the Civic Forum.

Final Note

What this paper highlights is the range of initiatives where individuals and organisations on the fringes of formal politics can, and have, made a difference. Hopefully the ideas and approaches can be adapted in other contexts.

DPI Board and Council of Experts

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Kerim Yildiz is Director of DPI. He is an expert in international human rights law and minority rights, and is the recipient of a number of awards, including from the Lawyers Committee for Human Rights for his services to protect human rights and promote the rule of law in 1996, the Sigrid Rausing Trust's Human Rights award for Leadership in Indigenous and Minority Rights in 2005, and the Gruber Prize for Justice in 2011. Kerim has written extensively on human rights and international law, and his work has been published internationally.

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Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner

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Jonathan Powell

British diplomat, Downing Street Chief of Staff under Prime Minister Tony Blair between 1997- 2007. Chief negotiator in Northern Ireland peace talks, leading to the Good Friday Agreement in 1998. Currently CEO of Inter Mediate, a United Kingdom -based non-state mediation organization.

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