



Comparative Study Visit Series for Parliamentarians: Ireland

2013-2014

Democratic
Progress
Institute

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June 2014



Published by
Democratic Progress Institute
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United Kingdom

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First published, 2014

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Foreword

This report details three high-level Comparative Study Visits to Ireland, organised by the Democratic Progress Institute. The aim of these visits was to bring delegates from each of Turkey's main political parties to discuss the general topic of conflict resolution in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process along with the specific interests of each delegation. These small visits were designed to allow participants from each of the main political parties in Turkey to be able to speak frankly and openly with those who had been involved in the peace process in Northern Ireland. Each visit was facilitated with the kind assistance of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, and was hosted by the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs.

DPI focuses on providing expertise, research and practical frameworks to encourage stronger public debates and involvement 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. As part of DPI's role of reaching and securing these aims, DPI focuses on supporting a public atmosphere and environment of inclusion and 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. DPI's

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.

These visits are part of DPI's wider Turkey programme. Further Comparative Study Visits will take place in the future elsewhere, bringing Members of political parties together along with journalists, civil society actors and other key actors and stakeholders in Turkey's current process. We hope that the learning from these visits will inform and feed into future work at the Institute and continue to engender discussion throughout Turkey's society. DPI would like to give special thanks to the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Ireland and to the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth Office for helping to facilitate these visits.



Kerim Yildiz

Director

Democratic Progress Institute

Comparative Study Visit Series for Parliamentarians (Turkey Programme): Ireland

*Hosted by the Irish Government's Department for Foreign Affairs,
Endorsed by the United Kingdom's Foreign and Commonwealth
Office and Facilitated in Partnership with the Glencree Centre for
Peace and Reconciliation*

- Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) Delegation: 17 – 20 July 2013
- Republican People's Party (CHP) Delegation: 6 – 10 May 2014
- Justice and Development Party (AK Party): 27 – 31 May 2014

Executive summary

The following summary outlines a series of three small, high-level Comparative Study Visits to Ireland with parliamentarians from each of Turkey's main political parties. The first visit in this series took place with five high level parliamentarians from Turkey's Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). This visit took place from 17th to 20th July 2013. The second visit in this series included seven high level members of the People's Republican Party (CHP). This visit took place from May 6th to 10th 2014. The third and final visit in this series included five high level delegates from Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and took place from May 27th to 31st 2014.

Each of these Comparative Study Visits provided participants with the opportunity to deepen discussion on and understanding of difficult technical issues surrounding the Northern Ireland Peace Process specifically, without the presence of their political opponents. Each of the studies was individually tailored to the specific interests and different focus areas of each delegation. Through meeting with key players in the Irish peace process, such as Irish Members of Parliament and government officials who were involved in ending the conflict through the parliamentary process there, participants in this series of visits have built significantly on their knowledge about relevant issues.

During each visit, delegates travelled to Dublin, Dundalk and Belfast to meet with key actors from the Irish peace process including parties and individuals involved in the Good Friday Agreement negotiations. Speakers in each visit included former Head of State during the Good Friday Agreement Mr Bertie Ahern, Members of the Irish Parliament in Dublin, Members of the Legislative Assembly in Belfast, former paramilitary and insurgent leaders from both sides of the conflict, key negotiators, civil society leaders and women actors among others. All actors offered comprehensive first-hand accounts on relevant issues. Chatham House Rule was applied throughout the visit, which also enabled uninhibited discussion and a high level of interaction between participants and speakers.

Focus areas during three visits included constitutional issues, government commissions, the role of third parties, conditions of peace, security sector and policing reform, disarmament and withdrawal, the importance of transparency/the role of confidentiality, the role of language, victims and peace commissions, the importance of timing, amnesty and prisoner release, questions of truth, memory and justice, building public support for a peace process and the importance of governance models in democratic transition processes.

These visits are part of the Institute's wider Turkey programme. More Comparative Study Visits will take place elsewhere in order to bring Parties together along with journalists, civil society actors and other key actors and stakeholders in Turkey's current process.

Comparative Study Visit Series for Parliamentarians (Turkey Programme): Ireland

Over the last year, the Democratic Progress Institute has conducted a series of three small, high-level Comparative Study Visits to Ireland with parliamentarians from each of Turkey's main political parties: the ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party); pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP) and main opposition party, the Republican People's Party (CHP). Delegates in each visit have been senior Members of Parliament, individually selected by the leadership of their respective parties, including Prime Minister Erdoğan in the case of the AK Party.

These Comparative Study Visits comprised four to five-day visits to Dublin, Dundalk and Belfast, to consolidate and build on previous Comparative Study Visits organised by the Democratic Progress Institute (DPI) and to provide participants with the opportunity to deepen discussion on and understanding of difficult technical issues surrounding the Northern Ireland Peace Process specifically. Each visit was hosted by the Irish Government's Department of Foreign Affairs, with the kind facilitation of the Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation.

While all three visits addressed the general topic of conflict resolution in the context of the Northern Ireland peace process, each of the studies was individually tailored to the specific interests and different focus areas of each delegation. The aim of conducting

smaller, individual visits for each party has been to provide space for in-depth briefings in an atmosphere of intimacy and trust, in which participants may engage as frankly and openly as possible with speakers. Through meeting with key players in the Irish peace process, such as Irish Members of Parliament and government officials who were involved in ending the conflict through the parliamentary process there, participants in this series of visits have built significantly on their knowledge about relevant issues. The smaller scale of the visits has also enabled participants to steer the agenda within each individual roundtable meeting and to focus on specific points of interest and relevance in greater depth, with a significant portion of each meeting being dedicated to open discussion and question and answer sessions, thus allowing for meaningful engagement among speakers and participants, and for sufficient attention and time to be paid to the different needs of each group.

During each visit, delegates travelled to Dublin, Dundalk and Belfast to meet with key actors from the Irish peace process, ranging from parties and individuals involved in the Good Friday Agreement negotiations; those with first hand experience in areas of DDR, SSR (specifically policing); civil society leaders; media representatives and others. While the specific topics addressed in each visit differed somewhat in accordance with each delegation's areas of interest; each visit considered the following: the importance of timing and choreography within peace processes (specifically negotiations and back channel discussions); constitutional arrangements, governance

and power sharing models; disarmament and decommissioning; the question of prisoners and prisoner release/reintegration and amnesty; women's role in conflict resolution and the gendered effect of conflict; mobilising civil society to support a peace process; the role of the media in conflict resolution; security and policing; flags and emblems and language and identity.

Speakers in each visit included TDs (members of the Irish Parliament) from the Republic of Ireland who were met with at the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) in Dublin; MLAs (Members of the Legislative Assembly) from Northern Ireland, who were met with at Stormont Buildings (Northern Ireland's Parliament Buildings) and at Belfast City Hall; former paramilitary and insurgent leaders from both Republican and Loyalist perspectives, met with during private visits to Belfast's interface areas and 'peace walls'; key negotiators and advisors from the process; women actors; and Ministers and officials of the Anglo-Irish Conflict Resolution Unit at the Irish government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade in Dublin, and the British government's Northern Ireland Office at Stormont House in Belfast. Speakers included Former Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern, who met with the delegations in his constituency, Drumcondra; Martin Mansergh, advisor to Bertie Ahern during the peace process; Dermot Ahern, former Minister for Foreign Affairs and heavily involved in the peace process; senior members of Sinn Féin (including Alex Maskey MLA and Jennifer McCann MLA) and the Democratic Unionist Party (including Jeffrey Donaldson MP); civil society groups

and actors including former Republican and Loyalist prisoners; members of women's groups; reintegrated paramilitaries working within interface communities; Richard Moore, former government spokesperson; media representatives and journalists from across the political divide, among others.

All actors met with were of crucial relevance to the delegations; and offered comprehensive first hand accounts on issues of relevance, providing space for candid discussion. Chatham House Rule was applied throughout the visit, which also enabled uninhibited discussion and a high level of interaction between participants and speakers.

Visit One: Peace and Democracy Party (BDP)

The first visit in this series took place with five high level parliamentarians from Turkey's pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party (BDP). This visit took place from 17th to 20th July 2013, with the first two days being spent in Dublin and Dundalk, and the final two days spent in Belfast. Participants in this delegation were as follows:

- Mr. Ahmet Turk, Member of Parliament, Mardin
- Ms. Aysel Tuğluk, Member of Parliament, Van
- Ms. Gültan Kışanak, Co-Chair and Member of Parliament, Diyarbakir (now Mayor of Diyarbakir)

- Mr. Nazmi Gur, Member of Parliament, Van
- Ms. Ayla Akat Ata, Member of Parliament, Batman

Visit Two: Republican People's Party (CHP)

The second visit in this series included seven high level members of the People's Republican Party (CHP), Turkey's main opposition party. This visit took place from May 6th to 10th 2014, with the first two days being spent in Dublin and the latter two in Belfast. Participants in this delegation were as follows:

- Ms Melda Onur, Member of Parliament, Istanbul
- Mr Veli Ağababa, Member of Parliament, Malatya
- Mr Vahap Secer, Member of Parliament, Ankara
- Mr Mustafa Moroğlu, Member of Parliament, İzmir
- Ms Binnaz Toprak, Member of Parliament, Istanbul
- Mr Nurettin Demir, Member of Parliament, Muğla

Visit Three: Justice and Development Party (AK Party)

The third and final visit in this series included five high level delegates from Turkey's ruling Justice and Development Party (AK Party) and took place from May 27th to 31st 2014. Participants spent the first two days in Dublin and the final three days in Belfast. Delegates were as follows:

- Mr Şuay Alpay, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Elazığ, Turkey
- Mr Osman Ören, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Siirt, Turkey
- Mr Ziver Özdemir, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), Batman, Turkey
- Mr Mehmet Sayım Tekelioğlu, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), İzmir, Turkey
- Mr Murteza Yetiş, Member of Parliament, Justice and Development Party (AK Party), İzmir, Adıyaman, Turkey
- Mr Yılmaz Ensaroğlu, Member of Prime Minister Erdoğan's Wise Persons Commission and Director, Law and Human Rights Studies, SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation

During each visit, participants attended lunch and dinner receptions hosted by Ireland's Department for Foreign Affairs in Dublin, the Northern Ireland Office in Belfast and Turkey's Ambassador to Ireland. Each reception was attended by speakers, government officials, experts and diplomatic guests, and gave participants the opportunity to discuss findings of the visit in more detail with one another, as well as to enhance their understanding of key issues through more informal discussion.

Particular areas of focus during the three visits included constitutional issues, government commissions, the role of third parties, conditions of peace, security sector and policing reform, disarmament and withdrawal, the importance of transparency/

the role of confidentiality, the role of language, victims and peace commissions, the importance of timing, amnesty and prisoner release, questions of truth, memory and justice, building public support for a peace process and the importance of governance models. Many of these topics were discussed in depth, with discussion of a number complex technical aspects of the subjects, as well as practical implementation issues. The intimate nature of the meetings provided the space in which to have such in-depth analysis with each of the resource people met with.

Speaker quotes

The following quotations are taken from talks given by a selection of speakers during roundtable meetings in this series of visits:

“We (Blair and I) decided, if we were elected at the next election in '97, we would make a big effort to see if we could bring the parties together”

“Using international figures helped us greatly”

“Nobody will ever have 100 per cent support and that will be the same in 100 years”

“The most difficult issue was decommissioning illegal arms..we had the advantage of having credible outsiders who could make the verification process acceptable to the public – if it was an Irish man it wouldn't have been believed by the public”

“It's a sensitive issue in terms of who sovereign governments sit down to negotiate with. There cannot be a sense that it's possible to bomb yourself to a negotiating table”

“When Senator George Mitchell sat down to chair the first meeting, the parties were so used to not talking, people spoke to each other via Mitchell. If he hadn't have been there, we would never have got people into the room”

“The reason (other) negotiations and attempts had failed over the years was that they had not been inclusive: they wouldn’t involve parties associated with violence”

“A whole generation of people would have joined the IRA had we not stopped the violence”

Former Taoiseach (Irish Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern during a roundtable meeting in his former constituency, Drumcondra

“When you have an Agreement you have to implement it. The Good Friday Agreement was a framework agreement so further work was needed...such as the reform of policing”

“Ceasefires do not survive in a political vacuum – undefeated groups will not give up violence unless there’s going to be something to replace it with – it’s a question of having a peaceful, democratic, balanced alternative”

“The British government’s public position was ‘you do not talk to terrorists’ ... in reality from 1990 they were having backchannel discussions”

“Sinn Féin did not want to be under media pressure. They were sending signals saying there would be no ceasefire, so it came as a surprise”

“There needs to be a way for grievances and victims to not take precedence over peace..peace is the first priority”

“There is compulsory power sharing across both communities. The price was that the IRA had to disarm and Sinn Féin had to support the new policing arrangements”

“The Good Friday Agreement included a de facto amnesty. All prisoners were released regardless of convictions, within two years”

“Peace had substantial economic benefits for both parts of Ireland. There is no doubt that civil conflict has a negative effect on a country’s economy”

Martin Mansergh, Former Fianna Fáil politician and Advisor to Former Irish Prime Minister Bertie Ahern, during a roundtable at the Dáil Éireann (Irish Parliament) in Dublin

“We do not see the process as finished..there are legacy issues to deal with such as unsolved crimes”

“To make changes of a constitutional nature, you need governments..it cannot be left to political parties. Two governments, at the highest level, were helping parties to draft a substantive agenda”

“If issues become so difficult they are stopping progress, park them and move on”

“The notion that prisoners would be released without serving sentences was a huge thing..it was difficult and is still difficult to accept”

“The reason the peace process started..we had it on good authority that there was the possibility of a settlement..people were up for a settlement if the conditions were right”

“There was fatigue on the side of the IRA. They had lost a lot of people and there were growing peace movements within their own communities”

Liz O'Donnell, former Minister and Irish Government representative at the Good Friday Agreement negotiations during a roundtable meeting at Boston College in Dublin

“It was important to allow for a degree of constructive ambiguity in the process – some phrasing was open to interpretation, so work on easier elements could proceed..ambiguity allowed the process to maintain momentum”

“There was wide ranging consultation with civil society organisations..inclusivity gave the process a very broad legitimacy and aided the building of a consensus around a ‘Yes’ vote for the Good Friday Agreement.”

“Popular endorsement was important”

“High profile visits from Clinton provided momentum for the process at difficult times.. At no point was the process dominated by the US or foreign friends internationally”

“Inclusion made it difficult for people to halt the process..there was recognition that without some form of buy-in by armed groups, the talks couldn’t succeed”

“Including the most extreme political groups in discussions changed their nature – when faced with the reality of operating within government structures..positions had to be compromised”

“The establishment of an independent monitoring commission was a confidence building measure”

Brendan Ward, Director, Conflict Resolution Unit, Irish Department for Foreign Affairs during a roundtable on the role of the Irish Government in the peace process at Iveagh House in Dublin

“Peace agreements are only as good as the paper they are written on – they only work if people see they are working”

“I was the first parliamentarian to be involved in secret talks with Sinn Féin in 1988. These talks were the start of the peace process and happened in a monastery in this town”

“My party was trying to convince Sinn Féin to go down the political route rather than the military route”

“In every conflict the issues are the same: ones of identity, culture, language and religion”

“One of the issues left to be dealt with later was that of flags and emblems... most people thought of that as a small issue. The flags issue was like a match: just one issue is needed to light it”

“Our peace process was going nowhere until we had involvement from an outside government – ie. the US government”

“One lesson we learned during our peace process was: no matter how bad things were, when atrocities happen..you have to try harder and redouble your efforts”

“A commission on decommissioning was set up, which later said that do the best of its ability, decommissioning has happened”

Dermot Ahern, Former Foreign Minister/Justice Minister and negotiator in the St Andrew’s Agreement during a roundtable meeting in his former constituency, Dundalk

“The word process is critical...people started a process and the solutions emerged.. You can't expect people to trust each other when there's been violence but if they trust the process there's a chance of success”

“People say the process started in 1994 with the ceasefires, but it probably started long before...it took decades of work to take it from a situation of violence to almost none, with a functioning government and sustainable peace”

“Having the right facilitators to encourage dialogue was proven to be useful”

“If high level work is not supported by dialogue work at a lower level that feeds into the high level process, it is not likely to be sustainable”

“When a process is exclusive it might seem attractive but it results in failure...it wasn't until all groups were included in the Good Friday Agreement that implementation could happen”

“Conflict is intergenerational”

William Devas, Chief Executive Officer, Glencree Centre for Peace and Reconciliation during a roundtable entitled 'Lessons from the Irish Peace Process' at the Merrion Hotel in Dublin

“An increasing number of schools in Northern Ireland are becoming integrated. A key objective of mine is to get to a point where all children are taught together regardless of religion”

“There is nothing at the moment that threatens the peace process. The major challenge is how we deal with the legacy of our troubled past..to move from a peace process to a reconciliation process”

“It is essential to get to know each other better. We are developing programmes to bring people together in dialogue and cooperation”

“The DUP were not happy with the Good Friday Agreement as we believed it made too many concessions, particularly in relation to the IRA”

“Today I can forgive people who killed my family..dealing with the past is challenging”

“I had to share office with the former Chief of Staff of the IRA. If I have to work with someone who was my enemy, to make peace for my children, that is the price I have to pay”

Jeffrey Donaldson, MLA and MP, Democratic Unionist Party during a roundtable at his constituency office in Lisburn, Belfast, entitled ‘Including the other. What needed to happen?’

“The role of women prisoners is something we’re trying to record”

“Many women gave a lot of their life to the struggle and suffered as a result in terms of health and other things”

“Prisoners were ordinary people, given a situation that led them to do extraordinary things. There was no alternative to what happened until the peace process took hold and then the opportunity came and was grasped”

Briege Brownlee, former Republican prisoner and campaigner against strip searching of women in Armagh prison, Sinn Féin Councillor and Falls Road Women’s Centre Coordinator, during a roundtable meeting at Coiste on Belfast’s Falls Road (interface area)

“From political negotiations we moved to a ceasefire and from a ceasefire to the Good Friday Agreement”

“I was released as a result of the Good Friday Agreement. I’ve since been working along with my comrades for the furtherance of the peace process”

“The reason you become engaged in armed struggle is to achieve a political goal”

“The IRA recognised that armed struggle can only take you as far as the negotiating table”

Roundtable meeting at Coiste on Belfast’s Falls Road (interface area) with Séanna Walsh, former Republican prisoner, hunger striker and cellmate of Bobby Sands. Walsh read the IRA Army Council statement announcing the end to its armed campaign in 2005

“Over the years, the fighters were always defined by the media as a small group..today we have a major political party with huge support – showing that many people supported our aims”

“One of the problems is that the British government stereotyped us and had a oneness of approach – a military approach”

“Because reform wasn’t given, a full blown rebellion came thereafter”

“Over half of the elected representatives in Sinn Féin are former IRA prisoners”

Michael Culbert, former Republican prisoner and Director, Coiste (ex-prisoner support organisation) during a roundtable meeting at Coiste on Belfast’s Falls Road (interface area)

“People behind the scenes were pushing to develop a language that both sides could find acceptable”

“In the 1980s the language of conflict was still present in the media”

“A stray word would drive people back into their enclaves and put pressure on those of good will to abandon the process”

Richard Moore, former Government Spokesperson and Media Advisor during a roundtable on the role of media in conflict resolution at Boston College in Dublin

“Many believe the way forward is through a truth and reconciliation process rather than through a legal process”

“It is important the politicians give room for discussion rather than allowing the media to set the agenda”

“It was necessary for the achievement of the initial Agreement, to put some issues to one side..these issues are now coming back”

Eoin Ó Murchú, Veteran RTE Journalist during a roundtable on the role of media in conflict resolution at Boston College in Dublin

“It was a matter of getting all elements of society together and getting them to move forward with a process”

“The foundations of the peace process were based on equality”

“Demilitarisation freed up society and showed people there was a different way”

“Conflict arose because politics had failed and change couldn’t be delivered”

“National identity of Irish citizens in the North has not been fully respected as yet”

“Some of the victims have been the most generous in terms of reconciliation”

“The elements (of the peace process) came together with the support of the US government”

Roundtable meeting with Sinn Féin TDs including party spokesperson Séan Crowe, at Sinn Féin headquarters in Dublin

“Part of the ethos of the Agreement was around equality of opportunity for everyone. Everyone would be treated as equals in government and among society as well”

“The Good Friday Agreement set up a new style of partnership government, which saw opponents come together”

“Many consider themselves as British and many as Irish: that had to be accommodated in the Good Friday Agreement”

“The police were a major component of the conflict for many years. We wanted to have a police service which was representative of the community and that would be held accountable politically to local representatives”

“All parts of the conflict knew that it wasn't going to move on, there was a realisation”

“The Irish language question is an example of the Good Friday Agreement not being implemented”

“We want to have Ireland reunited as a single, unified country, and we believe the Good Friday Agreement provides a means for us to advance that objective politically and peacefully”

“You can only end a conflict successfully if you address the causes of that conflict”

Roundtable meeting with Sinn Féin MLAs Alex Maskey and Jennifer McCann at Stormont Buildings, Belfast

DPI Board and Council of Experts

Director:

Kerim Yildiz

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.

DPI Board Members:

Nicholas Stewart QC (Chair)

Barrister and Deputy High Court Judge (Chancery and Queen's Bench Divisions), United Kingdom . Former Chair of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales and Former President of Union Internationale des Avocats.

Professor Penny Green (Secretary)

Head of Research and Director of the School of Law's Research Programme at King's College London and Director of the International State Crime Initiative (ICSI), United Kingdom (a collaborative enterprise with the Harvard Humanitarian Initiative and the University of Hull, led by King's College London).

Priscilla Hayner

Co-founder of the International Centre for Transitional Justice, global expert and author on truth commissions and transitional justice initiatives, consultant to the Ford Foundation, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and numerous other organisations.

Arild Humlen

Lawyer and Director of the Norwegian Bar Association's Legal Committee. Widely published within a number of jurisdictions, with emphasis on international civil law and human rights. Has lectured at law faculties of several universities in Norway. Awarded the Honor Prize of the Bar Association for Oslo for his work as Chairman of the Bar Association's Litigation Group for Asylum and Immigration law.

Jacki Muirhead

Practice Director, Cleveland Law Firm. Previously Barristers' Clerk at Counsels' Chambers Limited and Marketing Manager at the Faculty of Advocates. Undertook an International Secondment at New South Wales Bar Association.

Professor David Petrasek

Professor of International Political Affairs at the University of Ottawa, Canada. Expert and author on human rights, humanitarian law and conflict resolution issues, former Special Adviser to the Secretary-General of Amnesty International, consultant to United Nations.

Antonia Potter Prentice

Expert in humanitarian, development, peacemaking and peacebuilding issues. Consultant on women, peace and security; and strategic issues to clients including the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, the European Peacebuilding Liaison Office, the Global Network of Women Peacemakers, Mediator, and Terre des Hommes.

DPI Council of Experts

Dermot Ahern

Dermot Ahern is a Former Irish Member of Parliament and Government Minister and was a key figure for more than 20 years in the Irish peace process, including in negotiations for the Good Friday Agreement and the St Andrews Agreement. He also has extensive experience at EU Council level including being a key negotiator and signatory to the Constitutional and Lisbon Treaties. In 2005, he was appointed by the then UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to be a Special Envoy on his behalf on the issue of UN Reform. Previous roles include that of Government Chief Whip, Minister for Social, Community and Family Affairs, Minister for Communications, Marine and Natural Resources, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Justice and Law Reform. Dermot Ahern also served as Co-Chairman of the British Irish Inter Parliamentary Body 1993 – 1997.

Dr Mehmet Asutay

Dr Mehmet Asutay is a Reader in Middle Eastern and Islamic Political Economy and Finance at the School of Government and International Affairs (SGIA), Durham University, UK. He researches, teaches and supervises research on Middle Eastern economic development, the political economy of Middle East including Turkish and Kurdish political economies, and Islamic political economy. He is the Honorary Treasurer of BRISMES (British Society for Middle East Studies) and of the International Association for Islamic Economics. His research has been published in various journals, magazines and also in book format. He has been involved in human rights issues in various levels for many years, and has a close interest in transitional justice, conflict resolution and development issues at academic and policy levels.

Christine Bell

Legal expert based in Northern Ireland; expert on transitional justice, peace negotiations, constitutional law and human rights law advice. Trainer for diplomats, mediators and lawyers.

Cengiz Çandar

Senior Journalist and columnist specializing in areas such as The Kurdish Question, former war correspondent. Served as special adviser to Turkish president Turgut Ozal.

Yilmaz Ensaroğlu

SETA Politics Economic and Social Research Foundation. Member of the Executive Board of the Joint Platform for Human Rights, the Human Rights Agenda Association (İHGD) and Human Rights Research Association (İHAD), Chief Editor of the Journal of the Human Rights Dialogue.

Dr. Salomón Lerner Febres

Former President of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Perú; Executive President of the Centre for Democracy and Human Rights of the Pontifical Catholic University of Perú.

Professor Mervyn Frost

Head of the Department of War Studies, King's College London. Previously served as Chair of Politics and Head of Department at the University of Natal in Durban. Former President of the South African Political Studies Association; expert on human rights in international relations, humanitarian intervention, justice in world politics, democratising global governance, just war tradition in an Era of New Wars and ethics in a globalising world.

Martin Griffiths

Founding member and first Executive Director of the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Served in the British Diplomatic Service, and in British NGOs, Ex -Chief Executive of Action Aid. Held posts as United Nations (UN) Director of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, Geneva and Deputy to the UN

Emergency Relief Coordinator, New York. Served as UN Regional Humanitarian Coordinator for the Great Lakes, UN Regional Coordinator in the Balkans and UN Assistant Secretary-General.

Dr. Edel Hughes

Senior Lecturer, University of East London. Expert on international human rights and humanitarian law, with special interest in civil liberties in Ireland, emergency/anti-terrorism law, international criminal law and human rights in Turkey and Turkey's accession to European Union. Previous lecturer with Amnesty International and a founding member of Human Rights for Change.

Avila Kilmurray

A founder member of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition and was part of the Coalition's negotiating team for the Good Friday Agreement. She has written extensively on community action, the women's movement and conflict transformation. Serves on the Board of Conciliation Resources (UK); the Global Fund for Community Foundations; Conflict Resolution Services Ireland and the Institute for British Irish Studies. Avila was the first Women's Officer for the Transport & General Workers Union for Ireland (1990-1994) and became Director of the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland in 1994. Avila was awarded the Raymond Georis Prize for Innovative Philanthropy through the European Foundation Centre.

Professor Ram Manikkalingam

Visiting Professor, Department of Political Science, University of Amsterdam, served as Senior Advisor on the Peace Process to President of Sri Lanka, expert and author on conflict, multiculturalism and democracy, founding board member of the Laksham Kadirgamar Institute for Strategic Studies and International Relations.

Bejan Matur

Renowned Turkey based Author and Poet. Columnist, focusing mainly on Kurdish politics, the Armenian issue, daily politics, minority problems, prison literature, and women's issues. Has won several literary prizes and her work has been translated into 17 languages. Former Director of the Diyarbakır Cultural Art Foundation (DKSV).

Professor Monica McWilliams

Professor of Women's Studies, based in the Transitional Justice Institute at the University of Ulster. Was the Chief Commissioner of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission from 2005-2011 and responsible for delivering the advice on a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland. Co-founder of the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition political party and was elected to a seat at the Multi-Party Peace Negotiations, which led to the Belfast (Good Friday) Peace Agreement in 1998. Served as a member of the Northern Ireland Legislative Assembly from 1998-2003 and the Northern Ireland Forum for Dialogue and Understanding from 1996-1998. Publications focus on domestic violence, human security and the role of women in peace processes.

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.

Sir Kieran Prendergast

Served in the British Foreign Office, including in Cyprus, Turkey, Israel, the Netherlands, Kenya and New York; later head of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office dealing with Apartheid and Namibia; former UN Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs. Convenor of the SG's Executive Committee on Peace and Security and engaged in peacemaking efforts in Afghanistan, Burundi, Cyprus, the DRC, East Timor, Guatemala, Iraq, the Middle East, Somalia and Sudan.

Rajesh Rai

Rajesh was called to the Bar in 1993. His areas of expertise include Human Rights Law, Immigration and Asylum Law, and Public Law. Rajesh has extensive hands-on experience in humanitarian and environmental issues in his work with NGOs, cooperatives and companies based in the UK and overseas. He also lectures on a wide variety of legal issues, both for the Bar Human Rights Committee and internationally.

Professor Naomi Roht Arriaza

Professor at University of Berkeley, United States, expert and author on transitional justice, human rights violations, international criminal law and global environmental issues.

Professor Dr. Mithat Sancar

Professor of Law at the University of Ankara, expert and author on Constitutional Citizenship and Transitional Justice, columnist for Taraf newspaper.



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