American Friends Service Committee

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Karin Kullmann Five, Chair
Norwegian Nobel Committee
The Norwegian Nobel Institute
Henrik Ibsens Gate 51
NO-0255 Oslo, Norway
January 25, 2016

"We envision a world in which large-scale unarmed civilian peacekeeping using proven nonviolent strategies is recognized as a viable alternative in preventing, addressing, and mitigating violent conflicts worldwide."

— Nonviolent Peaceforce

Dear Karin Kullmann Five,

The American Friends Service Committee, representing Quakers worldwide, as laureates of the 1947 Nobel Peace Prize, is led to nominate Nonviolent Peaceforce for the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize. We commend this organization to you and the rest of the Norwegian Nobel Committee for your consideration.

In discerning which candidate to offer you each year, the AFSC Nobel Peace Prize Nominating Task Group carefully considers the words of Alfred Nobel's will establishing the Peace Prize. In that document, he specified that the prize should go "to the person who shall have done the most or the best work for fraternity between nations, for the abolition or reduction of standing armies and for the holding and promotion of peace congresses." After nearly a year of study, we conclude that Nonviolent Peaceforce fits these criteria better than any other potential nominee we have considered this year.

In October of 2015, the United Nations published a report entitled *Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing the Peace: A Global Study on the Implementation of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325*. Radhika Coomaraswamy writes "Unarmed civilian protection (UCP) is a method for the direct protection of civilians and violence reduction that has grown in practice and recognition. In the last few years, it has especially proven its effectiveness to protect women and girls."

That same report specifically highlights the work of Nonviolent Peaceforce, also mentioning Peace Brigades International, and Cure Violence, who "provide direct physical protection by presence, and who strengthen local protection mechanisms. This includes, for example, protective accompaniment and inter-positioning,

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ceasefire monitoring, rumor control, early warning and early response, confidence building, multi-track dialogue and local-level mediation and supporting local organizations committed to protection, reconciliation and human rights."

A separate United Nations document, also released in 2015, the *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people*, recommends that "In view of the positive contributions of unarmed civilian protection actors, missions work more closely with local communities and national and international non-governmental organizations in building a protective environment."

Attention to Unarmed Civilian Protection is growing, and its effectiveness is being tested and proven through increasing trials and reflective analysis, improving techniques and theories as this field expands and deepens. Cited in that same report, a study finds that "it is estimated that, since 1990, 50 civil society organizations have applied UCP methods in 35 conflict areas." Nonviolent Peaceforce is, and has been, at the vanguard of this work, which holds such promise for the very goals that Alfred Nobel originally set out in his will. Awarding the Nobel Peace Prize to Nonviolent Peaceforce would highlight and strengthen their work and the work of other similar organizations, at a time when worldwide tensions seem to be at a boiling point, and their work is vital and relevant.

Origins and methods of Nonviolent Peaceforce

In 2002, peace activists David Hartsough and Mel Duncan, along with other founders, constituted Nonviolent Peaceforce in Surajkund, India with peace advocates from 49 countries in attendance. One year later, in fall 2003, Nonviolent Peaceforce had its first intervention team in Sri Lanka. As Hartsough wrote in his book, *Waging Peace: Global Adventures of a Lifelong Activist,* "We wanted to be the international eyes, ears and conscience. Our mission was to help save the lives of people being targeted because of their work with justice and peace and to protect civilian communities that so often bear the brunt of violence in war zones. We hoped that never again would the world ignore those who are struggling for justice nonviolently."

Through a network of trained professional emergency responders, supported by people around the world who provide news releases, emails, videos and documentation about conflict areas, the isolation of communities in those circumstances is lessened. Through accompaniment, local people working on the front lines of justice and peacebuilding attain a measure of protection from assassinations and abduction.

With a total staff of 208, Nonviolent Peaceforce works in South Sudan, Ukraine, Myanmar, the Philippines, and most recently, Syria, where personnel are on the ground and planning trainings with local groups beginning in January 2016. The work of Nonviolent Peaceforce is rooted in the primacy of relationship building. By working with all parties in a conflict, escalation of violence may be avoided and negotiated settlement may be achieved.

Seeking to embody their values as well as promote them, the organization strives for a balanced gender representation among its staff, which is currently made up of 53% men and 47% women.

Their cross-cultural intervention teams are largely constituted of people from the global South, serving people of the global South.

Aware of the danger of neocolonial models of intervention, Nonviolent Peaceforce only serves in areas where they have been invited, and they conduct extensive and thorough interviews and research with all parties to a conflict before they decide whether or not to deploy teams to a conflict area.

They are also clear that their goal is to "arrive to leave", not intending to establish long-term presence and dependency, but rather seeking to address the conflict that caused their invitation, see it through to resolution, and then withdraw, building capacity among local people to manage conflict without their continued engagement. Nonviolent Peaceforce workers are not volunteers. They receive a salary, a policy that enables people of all economic classes to participate and to be able to remain in place for as long as it takes for the crisis to resolve.

The four stated over-arching goals of Nonviolent Peaceforce are:

- To create a space for fostering lasting peace.
- To protect civilians, especially those made vulnerable because of the conflict.
- To develop and promote the theory and practice of unarmed civilian peacekeeping so that it may be adopted as a policy option by decision makers and public institutions.
- To build the pool of professionals able to join peace teams through regional activities, training, and maintaining a roster of trained, available people.

Nonviolent Peaceforce workers help the people that they serve to create 'citizens' armies' that are unarmed, but trained and capable of confronting and repelling violence both within their own societies and from outside threats. Nonviolent Peaceforce engages all levels of the society, working with regional political and military leaders, and also directly with the general population. This is essential, given that civilians constitute the vast majority of casualties in modern war/conflict conditions. By training civilians as well as acknowledging established power structures, societies are empowered to create the conditions for a sustainable peace after Nonviolent Peaceforce departs.

As part of its work, Nonviolent Peaceforce has reunited many child soldiers with their families, and has helped to create weapons-free zones in conflict areas. Nonviolent Peaceforce also has staff living in several refugee camps, working with internally displaced persons. These teams communicate and cooperate with the United Nations and other relief organizations in protection programs, and mitigate gender violence through their Women's Security Teams, which have dramatically lessened the number of rapes that South Sudanese women experience while gathering water or firewood for their families. In the past year, Nonviolent Peaceforce provided over 1,000 accompaniments for vulnerable people, primarily women and children, throughout South Sudan.

Rationale for nomination

Given that Quakers are perhaps best known for our opposition to war and our belief in nonviolent methods of working for justice, it may be surprising that we would nominate an organization with the word 'force' in its title. We recognize, however, that there are many kinds of power. The work of Nonviolent Peaceforce is not to shrink from violence, but to meet it directly, while refusing to add to that violence in the process of doing so. As ever, the work of peacemakers is not to step away from conflict, but to step toward it, with the tools and conviction to engage conflict in ways that are constructive rather than destructive.

We support a fundamental paradigm shift from fear-based, military protection to collaborative, nonviolent protection. This position is not rooted in a naive view that cruelty and violence are rare or easy to overcome, but rather in the pragmatic observation that war has not ended war, and that history bears witness to the fact that violent 'solutions' have a tendency to morph into new forms of violence (witness the majority of the world's recent and current conflicts), whereas true peacebuilding can transform violent conflict zones into healthier societies (witness South Africa, Northern Ireland, Rwanda).

Conflict is endemic to human communities. The question for us is how best to engage in conflict. Nonviolent Peaceforce is demonstrating a better way, and one which has been endorsed by Nobel Peace Prize laureates Desmond Tutu, Rigoberta Menchú, and His Holiness the Dalai Lama, as well as, with this letter, American Friends Service Committee. We therefore respectfully request that you recognize its courageous, innovative, and effective work for peace by awarding Nonviolent Peaceforce the 2016 Nobel Peace Prize.

Respectfully Submitted,

Shan Cretin
General Secretary
American Friends Service Committee

Phil Lord
Clerk, Board of Directors
American Friends Service Committee