

## **Peace Antenna Interview with Mr Tilman Evers, Chairman, Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst, (*forumZFD*)**

*The Civil Peace Service Forum (*forumZFD*) is a non-governmental organisation that works to promote alternatives to violence. Its major goal is to establish a “civil peace service” as a conflict response strategy and tool both in international peace and security policies and in dealing with escalated conflicts at home in Germany. In 2005, *forumZFD* was honoured with the Göttinger Peace Prize, having already received the Gustav-Heinemann-Bürger Prize in 1997.*

**Vicky Rossi:** Why do you see a need in our present day and age for a civil peace service (CPS)?

**Tilman Evers:** Since World War II, there have been around 22 million killed globally in violent combat – many of whom were civilian non-combatants – tens of millions have been traumatised and hundreds of millions have become refugees. The causes of conflicts have become more complex. The instruments used to address conflict need to have a corresponding level of complexity. Until WWII, wars were mainly between states that sent their armies to fight. Now, conflicts tend to be “within” states, but they are more complex than civil wars, with internal and external actors engaged on both sides.

Non-governmental civil peace service organisations, like *forumZFD*, are only one actor in a whole set of actors, including governmental actors, working in these conflict areas. *ForumZFD* was set up in response to the break-up of ex-Yugoslavia: People were killing each other along ethnic lines of which previously they were hardly aware. This highlighted the need to enlarge our set of instruments for addressing this new type of ethno-political conflict.

Other complex conflicts include states in Africa where boundaries were arbitrarily set up by the colonial powers, the Caucasus where preset boundaries are no longer recognised, Sri Lanka where separatists want to create their own state and the Aceh region in Indonesia, where there are hopeful signs that civil war might be coming to an end.

**Vicky Rossi:** What do you see as the main advantages of a “civil” peacekeeping force over the military peacekeepers we are more accustomed to seeing?

**Tilman Evers:** First, let’s distinguish between non-governmental civil instruments and governmental civil instruments. They have different roles to fulfil, with different possibilities and restraints. Of course, there needs to be intelligent cooperation between these two sectors.

Military instruments for peacekeeping such as the Blue Helmets are, in the best case, able to suppress violence. They are not able to “make peace” and they know and acknowledge that. They know that they need civilian accompaniment to bring about peace. Governmental civilian instruments – diplomats, trade policies, development cooperation etc. - can address the main actors at the state level. But conflicts nowadays are so entrenched that there is also a need for non-governmental civilian instruments with access to the population. So at the “upper” state level, diplomacy is important, but at the

“medium” level i.e. regional and local leaders and at the “grassroots” level, an organisation like *forumZFD* is needed.

**Vicky Rossi:** Where are your civil peacekeepers currently stationed? Why did you choose these countries to pilot the *forumZFD* projects? What successes have you had there? What difficulties have you encountered?

**Tilman Evers:** We do not use the term “peacekeepers”, instead we speak of “peace consultants” because these people are useful at any phase of a conflict:

- Prevention – before violence has broken out;
- During a conflict – to try to halt the violence;
- In the aftermath – for dialogue and reconciliation.

*ForumZFD* peace consultants are working on mentalities and for this reason they need to speak the local language. They stay in a country for at least 2 years, but up to 5 years.

We currently have peace consultants in all the republics of the former Yugoslavia except Slovenia as well as in Israel and Palestine. The German development organisations which also participate in the CPS programme are further active in Africa including South Africa, Indonesia, Cambodia, Central America and Colombia. In total, there are at present 110 qualified peace consultants in place. This is a good number; however, it is too small. The worldwide *Nonviolent Peaceforce*, for example, of which *forumZFD* is a member, has at present 15 persons in place in Sri Lanka but intends to increase this number to 50; that would be a number that could really impact the course of events.

With regards successes and difficulties, it is important to consider this project by project, conflict by conflict. Each conflict and each project has its own successes and difficulties. In Macedonia, for example, *forumZFD* sent a teacher-couple to work in a big school in Skopje. This school was for Macedonian children only in the morning and for Albanian children only in the afternoon. The two sets of school children and teachers never met. The *forumZFD* peace consultants proposed that a painting contest be run for all the school children on the subject of “Your Vision of a Future Peaceful Macedonia”. More than 1,000 school children participated, which means that in addition several hundred teacher and parent-couples were engaged. The final exhibition of the paintings was held “together”. This was a first ever! Everybody was astonished to see that the children of both communities had produced the same kind of paintings. It really broke the ice between the two communities: None of them could have proposed such a painting contest - it would have been rejected by the other side. It needed an outside catalyst.

A further example was in Kosovo where a peace consultant, who had previously worked in North Ireland, invited some of his Protestant and Catholic friends to visit Kosovo to speak to Serbian and Albanian youngsters. They then made an inverse visit and the youngsters were able to observe the situation in Northern Ireland. They thought the situation there was crazy – that made them think about their own situation back home in Kosovo. Out of that visit a Kosovo-wide network of peaceworkers was set up by locals i.e. the ownership of the civil peace service passed to the hands of Kosovo people.

Regarding difficulties, these can be divided into formal, practical and political difficulties. Formal difficulties include obtaining permission to work in a country. Being non-governmental helps a lot here as no diplomatic status is needed. Then of course, how to get projects through application procedures in order to obtain the necessary funds.

Practical difficulties include where to live, where to set up office, where to get internet access, health issues, etc. As to political problems, there are people who do not want peace: adversaries, who sabotage a project by spreading lies like the peace consultants are CIA agents. Sometimes, groups working together don't show up because hard-liners get on their backs and prevent them from coming again. For example, for months our Israel/Palestine dialogue groups could not meet personally and had to communicate through internet. Some projects have had to be cancelled as a result.

**Vicky Rossi:** In which social conflicts has *forumZFD* been active in Germany? What successes have you had? What difficulties have you encountered?

**Tilman Evers:** In Germany, our *forumZFD* activities are in the planning phase. We have large groups of immigrants, especially from Turkey and from Russia, which have led to "ghettos" in some places, with the typical ingroup-outgroup tensions especially among youngsters. Even in Germany some of these "globalisation conflicts" might get violent - they did so in neighbouring France. There are already several inter-cultural projects with immigrant populations, however, *forumZFD* proposals aim to be more helpful as our basic assumption is not assimilation. We are proposing seeing both sides of any conflict so that the solutions are workable and liveable for all stakeholders.

**Vicky Rossi:** Is *forumZFD* a religious movement?

**Tilman Evers:** No. It is strongly backed by the Catholic and Protestant Churches, but any other religious denominations would also be welcome. We have, for example, Quakers within *forumZFD*. We also have non-religious members i.e. pacifists, who are welcome. There is, however, a spiritual background behind *forumZFD*. Members need lots of engagement and a love of mankind with the will to overcome obstacles even if they see no success in the short term. I would say: All those working in *forumZFD* have some kind of spiritual feeling.

**Vicky Rossi:** Within *forumZFD* there is an Academy for Conflict Resolution. Who can study at this Academy i.e. who can train to be a civil peace consultant? Do interested persons need to have any prior experience or training? And what skills are taught at the Academy for Conflict Resolution?

**Tilman Evers:** Peace consultants need to have quite some skills. Some can be learned i.e. at the Academy, but some are personal abilities that cannot be learned. So we choose applicants accordingly - who we feel can handle a conflict situation and who knows something about fear and aggression even within themselves. Previous formal

qualifications are good, but do not alone qualify a person for acceptance into the Academy. We look for people with integrated personalities. These men and women can then be taught additional skills like conflict analysis, how to run a project, dialogue for reconciliation with one or more parties, mediation, political and institutional frames, etc.

The Academy also teaches awareness for inter-cultural and inter-religious dialogue, gender issues and security questions. For example, students visit a military barrack and get training on mine awareness, how to drive a four-wheel car and how to operate a radio. These are the basic skills for all students at the Academy. Then there is the start-up training for the specific project which will be undertaken. This includes a 1 month crash course in the local language.

**Vicky Rossi:** Do you see the civil peace service as mainly a national structure or do you envisage a United Nations CPS to replace the Blue Helmets in the future?

**Tilman Evers:** Once again, it is important to distinguish not only between military and civilian instruments, but also between governmental and non-governmental civilian instruments. The Blue Helmets might still be needed in the future. Although some members of *forumZFD* are pacifists, we are all united behind the idea of a CPS. I myself don't exclude the tragic situation of having to stop violence by violence. But this is a police function that must be carried out under strict observance of international law.

As to civilian instruments: There is currently an international commission on a governmental level proposing a Peace Commission within the UN, in fulfilment of the Millennium Goals. Wonderful! However, this is aimed at reconstruction "after" conflict. We also need prevention. There is not much governmental activity with regard to prevention. Therefore, we need non-governmental activity. Interestingly, the idea of a civil peace service surfaced almost simultaneously in many European countries. The *European Network for Civil Peace Service* EN.CPS, of which *forumZFD* was a co-founder, has about 20 formal members and additional consultant organisations. Then there is the *Nonviolent Peaceforce*, which is worldwide. The EN.CPS does not run projects itself i.e. projects are run by the individual member organisations. The *Nonviolent Peaceforce*, however, runs its own projects – at present its pilot project is in Sri Lanka. For that, its member organisations delegate decisions to a governing board.

So the civil peace service is not a German idea. Our *forumZFD* organisation *is*, however, a German organisation. Although we receive funds from the German government, we remain independent and we are interlinked with similar organisations all over the world. We have been able to share our experiences with, for example, organisations as far away as Canada and Taiwan.

**Vicky Rossi:** On the subject of funding, where does *forumZFD* get the finances to carry out its projects?

**Tilman Evers:** *ForumZFD* is a non-governmental organisation. It wants to operate on a non-governmental level, but it would be unable to do so without public funds. We do

have donors and membership, the funds from which go to upkeep the organisational structures of *forumZFD*, which we fund independently. However, the German Development Ministry provides funds for the running of the civil peace service projects, and the Foreign Ministry puts in some extra funds for seminars and advocacy. This has been a big help. The willingness of the German government to provide funds for the CPS was a big advantage which enabled us to have an early start.

Working with government money means you do have responsibility – keeping the public informed and justifying what you are doing. Until now, we have never had any interference from the German government with the content of our projects. This type of public-private cooperation has a long tradition in Germany, for example amongst development organisations.

Our lobby work for the civil peace service in Germany led to its implementation by the Red-Green government in 1998. Since then, the established development organisations participate in the implementation of the programme, with their experience and their connections. But *forumZFD* is still doing the pace-making for the concept.

**Vicky Rossi:** Will women be as well represented as men within any civil peace service, or is a CPS destined to be as male dominated as the more traditional military corps?

**Tilman Evers:** Of our current peace consultants more than half are women. Women have access to a specific sector of the population which males do not. Nevertheless, at the governing levels there is still a preponderance of males. The issue of gender equality is very important to *forumZFD*. For example, the chair of our organisation is shared between one man and one woman. Currently, I hold the “male” chair and we will be electing a new “female” chair in November to replace the former chair, Mrs. Helga Tempel.

Peace can only be achieved by reaching the whole of the population. Women are half the population and so they are important communicators in this process.

**Vicky Rossi:** Are the members of your organisation, *forumZFD*, in favour of the abolition of national armies?

**Tilman Evers:** *ForumZFD* is an umbrella organisation set up in the course of the 1990s. Although there are some very outspoken pacifist organisations that lobby for the abolition of the German Army, they do that as part of their own initiatives. The common goal of all the *forumZFD* member organisations is the creation and instalment of a civil peace service. Not all the member organisations subscribe to the more radical pacifist line. We define ourselves as Pro-Peace, Pro-Human-Rights, Pro-Democracy, but not as Anti-Military.

**Vicky Rossi:** What plans for expansion does *forumZFD* have for the immediate future?

**Tilman Evers:** We are planning to open a 3<sup>rd</sup> region in Georgia and/or Moldavia. At the annual meeting of the *European Network for Civil Peace Services* in April, 40 representatives from all over Europe, including representatives from Georgia and Moldavia, gathered in Cluj, Romania. The representatives from Georgia and Moldavia invited the *European Network* to start projects in their home countries.

We also intend to extend the numbers of peace consultants. The Red-Green government would have expanded this number, but there were funding issues. There will probably be a change of government in Germany, back to the Conservatives, so we will possibly have some additional lobbying to do. Our hopes to expand the programme have enormous backing from social factors, including the churches, however, so the government will probably also hear support for *forumZFD* from these sectors.

\*This transcript represents an accurate but non-verbatim representation of the original interview.

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## ***The 21<sup>st</sup> of September is International Peace Day***

The International Day of Peace is observed each year on the 21<sup>st</sup> of September. Its observance coincides with the opening of the regular session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York. This day was proclaimed as the International Day of Peace by the General Assembly in 1981.

In 1981, the General Assembly declared that the opening day of its regular session in September "shall be officially dedicated and observed as the International Day of Peace and shall be devoted to commemorating and strengthening the ideals of peace both within and among all nations and peoples" (resolution 36/67). On 4 June 1998, the Assembly reaffirmed that the Day should continue to be observed on the opening day of its annual regular session (resolution 52/232).

At United Nations Headquarters, the Day of Peace is marked each year with a special ceremony near the Peace Bell. Each year, at 10:00 am local time (14:00 GMT), the United Nations Secretary-General delivers a special message before ringing the bells and calls upon the people throughout the world to reflect for a moment on the universal goals of peace. Following the moment of silence, the President of the Security Council makes a statement on behalf of the members of the Council.

**The true significance of the Day lies in the participation of people around the world gathering together to think about the meaning of peace and their commitment to its realization.**

“The world today spends billions preparing for war; shouldn’t we spend a billion or two preparing for peace?” - UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (SG/SM/6149)

# Information taken from  
<http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/peaceday/whatis.asp> &  
[http://www.un.org/events/peace\\_day99/peace.htm](http://www.un.org/events/peace_day99/peace.htm)

## **Related Links to a Civil Peace Service (CPS)**

### **NON-GOVERNMENTAL CIVILIAN PEACE SERVICES:**

#### **1. Germany**

*ForumZFD* is one of seven organizations implementing the German Civil Peace Service Programme. Their joint website is: [www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org](http://www.ziviler-friedensdienst.org) which also has a 10-page common standard definition of a CPS.

Given that the CPS is an instrument for the nonviolent transformation of conflicts, most organizations implementing the CPS idea in Germany are also members of the *German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Transformation*: [www.konfliktbearbeitung.de](http://www.konfliktbearbeitung.de)

#### **2. Europe**

*ForumZFD* is a member of the *European Network for a Civil Peace Service EN.CPS*: [www.en-cps.org](http://www.en-cps.org) This site has links to over twenty European member organizations.

Many members of the EN.CPS are also members of the European regional branch of the *Nonviolent Peaceforce*, whose website is [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)

Some members of the EN.CPS are also members of the Brussels-based *European Peacebuilding Liaison Office EPLO*, whose website is [www.eplo.org](http://www.eplo.org) This site has links to all EPLO members, some of which are “semi-governmental” e.g. *Austrian Peace Center*, Stadtschlaining: [www.aspr.ac.at](http://www.aspr.ac.at)

There are also private consulting firms qualified in civilian conflict transformation e.g. the *Austrian Institute for Integrative Conflict Transformation and Peacebuilding*: [www.iisp.at](http://www.iisp.at)

#### **3. Worldwide**

*Nonviolent Peaceforce:* [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)  
*Nonviolent Peaceforce Canada:* [www.npcanada.org](http://www.npcanada.org)  
*Peace Brigades International:* [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org)  
*Quakers:* [www.nonviolence.org](http://www.nonviolence.org)  
*International Fellowship of Reconciliation:* [www.ifor.org](http://www.ifor.org)  
*Transcend:* [www.transcend.org](http://www.transcend.org)  
*The Transnational Foundation, TFF* [www.transnational.org](http://www.transnational.org)

#### **UNDER THE AUSPICES OF THE UNITED NATIONS:**

*Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict:*  
<http://www.gppac.net/index.html>

*People Building Peace:* [www.peoplebuildingpeace.org](http://www.peoplebuildingpeace.org)

#### **GOVERNMENTAL CIVILIAN PEACE SERVICES:**

*US Peace Corps:* [www.peacecorps.gov](http://www.peacecorps.gov)

#### **ADDITIONAL READING:**

A selection of project reports and “best practice”: [www.peace-counts.org](http://www.peace-counts.org)

“Enhancing UK Capacity for Handling Conflict: The Rationale for a UK Civilian Peace Service” by Tim Wallis and Mareike Junge:  
<http://peaceworkers.org.uk/researchpage.html>

“Civilising Conflict. Some Reflections on the Civil Peace Service” by Jürgen Wilhelm  
[www.inwent.org/E+Z/1997-2002/de602-3.htm](http://www.inwent.org/E+Z/1997-2002/de602-3.htm)

**“PEACE IS NOT MERELY A DISTANT GOAL THAT WE SEEK, BUT A MEANS BY WHICH  
WE ARRIVE AT THAT GOAL.”  
MARTIN LUTHER KING**