

**Committed to Peace**

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**forumZFD**



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Mission Statement – Forum Civil Peace Service

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# 1 Introduction

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## **Building peace requires civil means. One of them is the Civil Peace Service (CPS).**

The CPS is a policy concept as well as an operational approach for achieving peace. Its present form was shaped in a joint effort of civil society and the state. It has grown in recent years – but its potential has not yet been exhausted to the full.

Our own organisation, the Forum Civil Peace Service (Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e. V. – forumZFD), has grown, too. A substantial number of member organisations, individual members and sponsors support our work. Dozens of people are employed by us. Our teams of civil peace experts are deployed in various parts of the world.

What changes have we all undergone in recent years? Are we still following the same goals as in the beginning? What motivates us and which principles guide us in our work at home and abroad? A shared assessment of these questions throughout the year 2012 has led to the adoption of this Mission Statement, reflecting our common perception of the forumZFD internally and externally. It describes who we are as an organisation – and what we want to become.

The wording of this Mission Statement is the result of many lively debates amongst members, trustees and employees. It is a conclusion and a prelude in one: The forumZFD will continue to develop – and so will this Mission Statement.

(adopted by the Annual Membership Assembly of the Forum Civil Peace Service (Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e. V. – forumZFD) on 20 October 2012 in Cologne-Ehrenfeld)

## 2 Our basic foundations

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**The Forum Civil Peace Service was founded in 1996 with a mandate to ensure the “realisation of the idea of a Civil Peace Service”. As a response to the wars in disintegrating Yugoslavia and other armed conflicts at the time, various peace groups formed this new organisation in order to overcome violence and promote peace with non-military means.**

**Conflicts are an inevitable part of human coexistence. They might even be necessary to overcome outdated structures and make room for something new. However, for this to happen, they must be dealt with constructively according to the principles of civil conflict management and transformation.**

**This is still our firm belief today: There are alternatives to violence in the face of conflicts. We are guided by the vision of a world community which does not resort to violence when dealing with disparities. Our instruments of civil conflict management and our expertise in this field are contributions to such a world.**

### 2.1 Our values

Within the forumZFD, organisations and individuals with different ideological, political and religious backgrounds are working together. What unites us is our respect for life and human dignity. For us, this results in a basic attitude of non-violence against human beings and nature.

We are committed to universal human rights. Of special importance to us in this context are gender equality and the right to democratic participation of all social, ethnic and religious groups.

As a basic condition for peaceful human coexistence, we value the right of each community to economic welfare, political self-determination and cultural development – a right that equally applies to all other communities as well. On this basis of mutual recognition, we advocate for equal opportunities and equality of different cultures and ways of life.

The concept of war is not compatible with these values. We reject policies that give priority to military means – for example, by investing thousands of times more funds into armaments rather than into civil conflict management.

### 2.2 Our goals

We view the work of our association as part of a world-wide effort to minimise the use of weapons and other forms of collective violence and substitute them by non-violent action – between individuals, between groups and between nations. We thereby want to contribute to societal structures of a just and sustainable peace in Germany, in Europe and in the whole world.

In particular we strive to

- broaden and strengthen the practice of non-violent conflict management
- qualify experts for such tasks
- enhance and deepen societal awareness of these goals, and
- demand a priority for civil conflict management from the political sector.

We are aware that preventing and overcoming hatred and violence cannot be sustainable in societies where want and injustice prevail and where people are suffering under discrimination and structural violence. In this vein, we view our work as a reciprocal addition to the operational fields of international development cooperation, humanitarian relief efforts and human rights promotion as well as social and community work back home.

### 2.3 Our methods

Building peace needs experts. Specifically qualified advisors for peace building and conflict management can safeguard an adequate response to the complex problems of conflict situations. We train people to become qualified experts of the Civil Peace Service and deploy them in crisis areas for prevention, management and transformation of conflicts. In cooperation with local partners, these experts will endeavour to prevent or minimise violence and build peace promoting structures.

Within Germany, our qualified conflict advisors support urban communities in which social and structural changes have led to severe tensions.

The forumZFD advocates for the strengthening of civil bodies in state and society and a democratic participation of all social groups. From the political sector we demand an expansion of civil conflict management and submit our own suggestions for this to happen.

In order to strengthen the concept of civil conflict transformation world-wide, the forumZFD is actively involved in the European Network for Civil Peace Services (EN.CPS) and the global Nonviolent Peaceforce (NP).

### 3 Our organisation and fields of operation

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**The forumZFD is an association of organisations and individuals who work in the areas of promoting peace, human rights and international development. It is not aligned to any political party or religious denomination. Its statutes make it a not-for-profit organisation with a Supervisory Board and an Executive Board elected by the Annual Membership Assembly. It maintains a Head Office in Cologne, a training centre and project offices in the respective conflict areas.**

**The association is funded from membership fees, donations and other means of fundraising. The funds for projects abroad as well as for professional training are mainly secured from the programme “The Civil Peace Service in international development cooperation” which is run by the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).**

**The forumZFD is an officially recognised international deployment agency within the provisions of the German Development Workers Act (Entwicklungshelfer-Gesetz). It has been honoured with the Gustav Heinemann Citizens Award 1997 and the Goettingen Peace Award 2005.**

**The operations of the forumZFD comprise of three interdependent areas:**

- **Peace politics**
- **Civil conflict management**
- **Academy for Conflict Transformation**

**Each of these fields of operation is significant on its own, but each one is also strengthening the other two. Together, they contribute to a further development of the instruments and methods for non-violent conflict transformation.**

**Each of these fields of operation is managed by a respective department within our Head Office. All three areas are further supported by a fourth department for administration and finances.**

#### **3.1 Peace politics – Our approaches to public relations and capacity building**

As the organisation that developed the CPS concept in the first place, we still see ourselves as advocates for the idea of an independent permanent instrument for peace initiatives by civil society. This determines the content and goals of our approaches to public relations and capacity building.

As a non-governmental organisation, we monitor the policies of the German Federal Government closely and advocate our goals in front of state institutions, political parties and decision makers. We carefully watch the influence of German politics and economic interests in crisis areas.

With publications and campaigns, we promote a public debate about peace and civil conflict management. We strive to get broader support for our concerns in personal conversations and at special events.

Our work in the field of capacity building includes engaging institutions of adult education as well as schools. Special events in this context are our annual peace runs by pupils and students in various German cities: They are educational projects, peace demonstrations and fundraising events for peace in one.

A special asset for our political public relations work is the close cooperation with our member organisations as well as the active involvement of our individual members. Through them, the forumZFD is gaining support for its concerns and can spread its message throughout society.



## 3 Our organisation and fields of operation

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### 3.2 Civil conflict management – Our projects and programmes

Working together with local partners in our projects and programmes, we endeavour to prevent or minimise eruptions of violence in conflict areas and find ways to peaceful cooperation. To this end, we put together international teams of qualified peace experts. During their deployment of usually several years, they will support local experts to keep up a dialogue between conflicting parties and prevent an escalation of a volatile situation. In line with our concept of “third party intervention”, they will seek access to all parties of the conflict and will assist in building participatory and peace promoting structures.

Using a similar approach, we manage conflicts between various citizens’ groups within Germany – conflicts which result from social and structural changes in many urban areas. Our experts support local authorities in meeting these challenges. That’s why we refer to our domestic projects as “communal conflict counselling”.

Our individual projects are embedded into our programmes for certain conflict regions which in turn are part of our comprehensive country strategies. We only embark upon a project after careful planning and consultation with our potential partners in conflict areas. In this context, we determine goals and indicators for an impact analysis which are monitored regularly during the duration of a project. To safeguard results and further development,

projects are also being evaluated. The results will determine the criteria for future projects as well as the curricula of our trainings.

From the very beginning of our project work abroad, it has been important for us to broaden local expertise and thus strengthen the potential for peace building in a sustainable manner. In our project offices, we cooperate at all levels with local colleagues who, beyond their own expertise and mandate, identify with our goals and values. The term “experts” refers to all peace and conflict advisors in our projects who are capable of constructive conflict management.

We also seek a dialogue with the perpetrators of violence, if this appears necessary and useful for effective conflict transformation and after possible side effects have been considered, for example a negative perception of the opposed party. In postconflict situations, we support local experts in overcoming stereotypes of “the enemy” and finding a future-oriented approach when dealing with the past.

Besides their direct impact on the ground, all projects and programmes have an exemplary function as well; they breathe life into our political ideas and are practical manifestations of non-violent policies.

### 3.3 Academy for Conflict Transformation – Our professional training

People can learn to solve their conflicts without resorting to violence. Professional peace and conflict advisors can promote this learning process. For this, we prepare our experts comprehensively. In specific courses lasting for several months, we enable them to acquire the necessary expertise and competencies of conflict transformation.

This operational department of the forumZFD addresses all interested people in Germany and abroad and has its own brand name: the Academy for Conflict Transformation (Akademie für Konflikttransformation – AfK). The teaching methods of the Academy are based on participatory learning, taking into account already existing expertise and abilities as well as personality building of the students. The content of our courses is determined by the expected working environment and the needs of the people in conflict areas. The development of curricula is further influenced by previous experiences of the forumZFD in various projects.

On top of that, the Academy offers tailor-made trainings for specific target groups or in specific geographical regions. In certain areas, it cooperates with universities and other educational institutions. It also uses the international contacts of the forumZFD as a means of developing universal quality standards and promoting exchanges of operational ideas. Furthermore, the Academy organises its own events and cooperates with various stakeholders to foster a scientific debate about peace policies.







## 4 Our principles of conduct

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To ensure that our methods correspond with our goals and values, our work is determined by the following principles of conduct:

### **Non-violence**

We operate without resorting to any violence. We are also aware of the subtle forms of violence in social relationships, the use of language and behaviour and try to bring about adequate changes.

### **Partner orientation**

Sustainable peace structures must be developed and supported by the social actors in conflict areas themselves. A basic pillar of our work is therefore the cooperation with local partners who stand for minimising violence and promoting dialogue. We view this cooperation as an equal and reciprocal partnership of learning which also helps to develop local expertise.

### **All-partisan approach**

We operate as “third party”, which means we are not taking the side of any one conflict party. Instead, we try to find a way to communicate with everyone involved in a particular conflict. We do this by treating the perceptions, needs and legitimate interests of all parties with equal respect and by looking for potential points of convergence between them. That’s why we always cooperate with several partners who will convey different points of view and capabilities. This does not mean that we are “neutral” in the sense that we renounce our own values. By the very

means of explaining our own background, we gain credibility as an external actor. Without claiming moral superiority and by showing a carefully deliberated respect for the “ownership” of all parties involved, we are in a better position to hand out approval and criticism and convey our own experience and suggestions.

### **Clear separation from any armed forces**

We communicate with all stakeholders which also include members of the armed forces from Germany or any other country. However, any cooperation with the military is out of the question for us.

### **Professionalism**

We qualify and support our experts, we monitor the impact of our work and evaluate it, and we have a regular exchange of knowledge and experience with other professionals. Thus, we ensure that our work, in its concept as well as its implementation, meets our objective to achieve proven positive impacts and avoid negative ones.

### **Systemic approach**

We follow the “systemic approach to conflict transformation”. This approach views a conflict and its progression as a “complex system” and deals with its structural causes as well as the actions, the behaviour and the attitudes of the involved parties.

### **Cultural and gender sensitivity**

The perception of the cause and progression

of a conflict as well as of possible solutions is largely determined by the cultural background of the parties involved. Crucial elements in this context are the different roles ascribed to men and women. Our experts aim to understand and respect the cultural norms in a conflict area – as long as they do not violate human rights or lead to an obvious discrimination against certain parts of the population, especially women. The day-to-day work of our experts as well as their team work will take these aspects into account.

### **“Do no harm”**

We take care that we do not involuntarily exacerbate a conflict. We thus follow the principles of “do no harm” in our project planning and implementation.

### **Transparency**

We disclose the goals, contents and methods of our work, as long as we can do this without jeopardising our employees and partners or the success of our work. We especially endeavour to make the results of our evaluations available to our partners in an adequate language. Our financial transparency is safeguarded by the publication of our annual reports and external auditing. We are a member of the initiative “Transparent Civil Society”.

### **Self-reflection**

We train our experts to be aware of how they themselves deal with fear, aggression and conflict and to watch their own reactions to the often daunting experience of living in a

conflict area. On the other hand, our experts often have a privileged status abroad which requires an increased sensitivity with regards to discriminating structures, power and privileges. That’s why we constantly offer them support and advice during their deployment in our projects. The same holds good for our staff in management positions and for our organisation as a whole.

### **A learning organisation**

We see ourselves as a learning organisation in which we practise and develop our knowledge and expertise internally and externally. We submit our goals and results to the critical scrutiny of all parties involved and view the diversity of perspectives and approaches to action as an asset. We further develop our institutional memory continuously through the exchange of knowledge and experience, evaluation and documentation. We strive to make learning and change processes an intrinsic part of our organisational culture, also with a view to changing conditions on the ground.

### **Participation**

We aim to base the mutual cooperation of our members, executives and staff on consensus decisions, with hierarchies being levelled off. Where hierarchical decisions are necessary, they will be taken in a transparent manner on the basis of job related responsibilities. The active participation of members and employees in the organisational development and in operational processes will thus be guaranteed.

## 4 Our principles of conduct

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### Internal conflicts

Wherever we experience discrepancies, we view them as an incentive for change. In line with our goals and principles, we endeavour to deal with internal conflicts constructively. We further develop and clarify our ideas in an open discourse with each other.

In our daily work, it will remain a permanent challenge to adhere to all these principles of conduct equally. Inevitably, there are in-built tensions when rating these principles and relating them to our values and goals. One example is the inherent tension between our all-partisan approach and our basic values of human dignity and human rights, whenever the latter are being violated by conflicting parties.

## 5 Our cooperation partners

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We, the members of the forumZFD, are the “owners” of this association – and thus of this Mission Statement as well. We extend our appreciation to the employees of the forumZFD at home and abroad who are implementing our peace goals on the ground; with their experience, they have significantly contributed to this Mission Statement. Reciprocal exchange, with like-minded organisations as well as with the social and political sector, is a basic pillar of our work. What we stand for must be reflected in the way we cooperate with others internally and externally.

A special feature of the forumZFD is its composition not only of individual members but also of organisations. These member organisations are shaping the development of the association in a special way. Their own goals and activities supplement the approach of the forumZFD. From the very beginning, some of these member organisations have been cooperating with the forumZFD in specific joint projects.

We cannot achieve the goals of non-violent conflict transformation alone, but only in cooperation with others. That’s why the forumZFD maintains close contacts with other stakeholders for civil conflict management as well as with peace activists in general.

Within the Civil Peace Service Consortium (Konsortium Ziviler Friedensdienst), the forumZFD cooperates with other German CPS agents to safeguard the political,

professional and material enhancement of the Civil Peace Service. The forumZFD is a founding member of the German Platform for Peaceful Conflict Management (Plattform Zivile Konfliktbearbeitung). It joins in with the Platform’s mandate of political advocacy and professional exchange.

Furthermore, the forumZFD works together with like-minded associations and networks, for example in joint campaigns and events.

With state institutions and public donors, especially the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), we cooperate in ways that safeguard our independence according to our own values, goals and principles.

Within the European Network for Civil Peace Services and the global Nonviolent Peaceforce, we view ourselves as an impulse contributor who can convey ample experience in the areas of political public relations, project work and professional training.

Consciously, the forumZFD commits itself to worldwide cooperation. With its work in Germany and abroad, it responds to tensions and divisions in our globalised world. At the same time, however, opening-up boundaries offer new opportunities for civil peace work to overcome confrontations and bring people together.





**forumZFD**

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