



13th International
Anti-Corruption Conference
IACC

Global Transparency:
fighting corruption for a sustainable future.
Athens, Greece | 30 October - 2 November 2008

Final Workshop report

Title of Workshop:

Fragmented Tyrannies: The Nexus of Corruption and Extreme Violence

Moderator (Name and Institution)

Vanessa Ortiz, Director, Civic and Field Relations, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

Rapporteur

Name and position

Shaazka Beyerle, Senior Advisor

Institution

International Center on Nonviolent Conflict

Panellists

Name and position

Institution

Kingsley Bangwell, Team Leader and Founder of Youngstars Foundation Int.- Nigeria

Claudia Samayoa, Co-founder, Unit of Protection of Human Rights Defenders (UDEFEQUA);
Member of the Advisors Council for Security to the President of Guatemala

Stephen Zunes, Professor of Politics, Chair of Middle East Studies Program, University of
San Francisco

Summary (300 words)

People, even if they do not live under authoritarian systems, can nonetheless face repression. In post-conflict states, often fledgling democracies, citizens can be subjected to violence perpetrated by paramilitary groups, gangs, narco-cartels, organized crime, insurgents, and state security forces. The cumulative effects of organized violence and the refusal or inability of authorities to furnish human security - often due to endemic corruption - can inhibit peoples' basic freedoms. Ordinary people thus live under the equivalent of a "fragmented tyranny" of authoritarian forces.

Endemic corruption can function as an enabler of violent groups, which engage in illicit activities to make money and acquire weapons, or as a by-product of their efforts to capture local and national institutions and security forces such as the police. Violent insurgents use poverty and injustice to justify their actions and recruit members, which only sustains the cycle of violence.

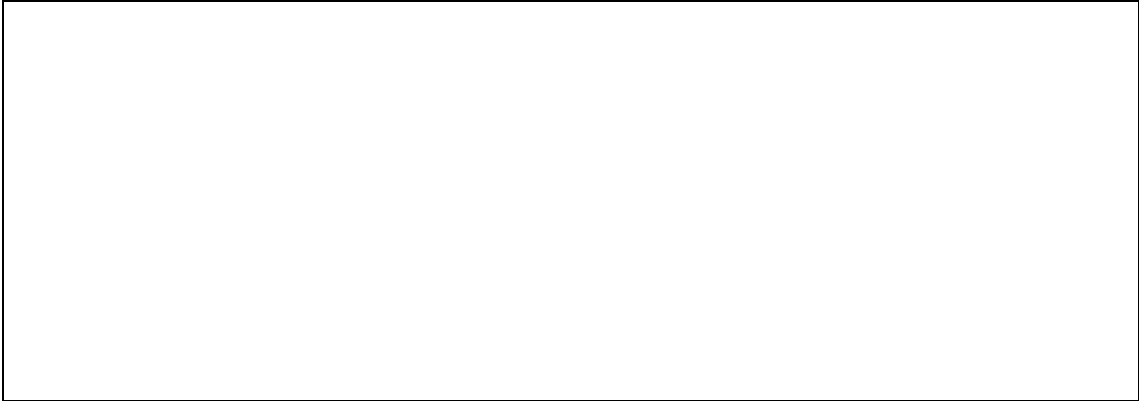
This session brought together experts and grass-roots civic activists, to examine the dynamics of civic empowerment and action, or civil resistance, expressed through collective, organized campaigns. Past and present cases of civic campaigns to break the corruption-violence nexus, and lessons learned were featured.



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Summary of presentations (300 words per panellist)

Vanessa Ortiz, Director of Civic and Field Relations, International Center on Nonviolent Conflict, noted that in these "fragmented tyrannies," alleviating poverty and injustice is usually extremely slow. But people are not powerless to change their conditions of oppression.

A new study of 323 violent and nonviolent campaigns from 1900 to 2006 found that violent campaigns succeeded in only 26 percent of all cases, compared to 53 percent for nonviolent, civilian-based campaigns (Stephan and Chenoweth, "Why Civil Resistance Works," *International Security*, Summer 2008.) As well, in the face of crackdowns, civilian-based campaigns are six times more likely to succeed than violent campaigns that also faced repression. This shows that violence is not the ultimate form of power. People themselves -- who experience the nexus of violent insurgency, crime and corruption -- can move from being victims and bystanders to becoming a force for transforming their societies.

Dr. Stephen Zunes, Professor of Politics, Chair of Middle East Studies Program, University of San Francisco, explained that choosing the means of struggle is not merely a choice of tactics, but a choice of different forms of power. At its core, civic power stems from people, numbers of people who collectively withdraw their consent and cooperation from the system of oppression, and engage in a variety of nonviolent actions strategically designed to disrupt the status quo, challenge the legitimacy of power structures, and win support to their side. There are literally over two hundred kinds of nonviolent actions, including boycotts, strikes, civil disobedience, noncooperation, self-sufficiency initiatives, protests, teach-ins, blockades, and more recently, and digital technology to document and expose fraud.

Dr. Zunes pointed out that a vicious circle can develop, whereby authoritarian and/or ineffectual governance paired with endemic corruption, results in the de-legitimization of authority and rule of law, leading to fragmented tyrannies, which in turn reinforces authoritarian and/or ineffectual governance, and so on. On the other hand, nonviolent action can activate an anti-corruption circle. Strategic civic campaigns can challenge the violence-corruption nexus, which in turn create alternative loci of power, thereby empowering civil society to continue to wage strategic civic campaigns.

He highlighted past and present cases of campaigns targeting violence and corruption. During the 1950s and 1960s in Sicily, Italy, Danilo Dolci, led civic anti-mafia campaigns that engaged in sit-ins, reverse strikes, blockades, fasting, and enlisted international solidarity. In the 1990s, the Medellin Youth Network, an anti-militarism movement targeting rebel groups and government paramilitary forces in Columbia, encouraged people to refuse conscription in any of the armed groups, organized public draft-card burning, leafleted induction lines and held creative sidewalk theater performances. Since 2000 in Juarez, Mexico, a campaign targeting gender-based violence against women, has initiated a tourist boycott, court-watching, public artwork displays, and has opened support centers and built crosses, symbolizing those murdered, at busy border intersections. Launched in 2007, the "Fifth Pillar" targets bribery in India with innovative low-risk actions such as passing out "anti-corruption" zero-rupee notes, petitioning, and anti-bribery pledges. In Egypt's April 6, 2008 "Facebook Revolution, catalyzed by young bloggers, social networking was used to communicate, organize, and mobilize ordinary citizens in one of the largest general strikes on record. Supporters also held demonstrations, wore black T-shirts and painted graffiti.

Claudia Samayoa, Coordinator, Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit Security Advisor to the President of Guatemala, presented two cases of innovative grass roots campaigns engaging in civic action to break up the corruption-violence nexus, maintain resilience in the face of violent repression, and foster social and economic development.



Santa Lucia Cotzumalguapa, a town in the south of the country, is tragically situated in a spot convenient to cross-border narco-trafficking from Columbia to Mexico. A local citizen's movement emerged in the aftermath of the country's civil war (1960-1996). Its objectives were to recover the community from the hands of drug lords and organized crime, promote economic and social development, prevent electoral fraud, challenge the climate of impunity, and defend the victories along the way.

Organizers built a strong coalition that included women, youth, and community groups. They conducted a wide and creative range of nonviolent actions, such as civil disobedience, demonstrations, monitoring of municipal officials and spending, literacy and development programs, radio call-in programs, theatre, and recreation projects aimed at youth, who are often the targets of organized crime recruitment. In spite of violent intimidation, kidnapping and murder, civil resistance is ongoing, and solidarity networks have been established with other communities and citizen groups in the country and across borders.

Ms. Samayoa presented a second case in which she has been involved – the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The objective is to initiate the dismantling of the clandestine security apparatuses (CIACS). During the civil war, the army formed these groups to wage counterinsurgent battles. To finance them, they promoted organized crime, thereby establishing a corruption-violence link that survived the cessation of the conflict. By 2002, CIACS were taking violent action openly against human rights defenders, judges and journalists. While the government knew CIACs were behind these attacks, the state was too weak to confront them.

At the national level, an intensive civic movement to dismantle CIACS mobilized both Guatemalans and the international community, and after large public actions targeting legislators, the government agreed to create an international commission to take apart the CIACS.

Kingsley Bangwell, Team Leader and Founder of Youngstars Foundation Int., first gave brief background about The Niger Delta region, which has a population of approximately 31 million people (22 percent), is home to about 250 oil wells, and accounts for over 80 percent of Nigeria's revenue and export earnings. Toxic wastes pollute the air and rivers, destroying aquaculture enterprise, farmland and human health.

He outlined how the Niger Delta is essentially under siege by the federal government and increasing numbers of militias that now target Nigerians. In a brazen move, earlier this year, militias even bombed the residence of the Vice President. The government's response has been military attacks and clamping down on the people. As the welfare of Niger Deltans grow worse, these actions provoke resentment, anger and aggression among ordinary citizens, particularly youth. The militias are able to recruit because they offer what is perceived to be an alternative to this misery - one that includes a philosophy of power (violent), a sense of belonging, income, social structure and even rules by which to live. Impoverished youth find a "home" in such groups.

Corruption enables militias to organize and finance their activities. Mr. Bangwell reported that the groups are becoming more sophisticated with funding from "bunkering" oil on the black market, at an estimated annual amount of \$1.5 billion.

In his work as a youth leader, he observed that young people have a low level of knowledge about civic power and action, and they hold the erroneous belief that violence is more effective than civil resistance. However, he has found that once exposed, Niger Delta youth more easily grasp the potential of civic power than some in the older generation. He believes this is because they have an open mind, are less cynical, and possess courage and creativity.



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He explained that they are willing to fight for change, because they want to play a part in the social and economic development of their communities and country. Thus, where there are challenges, he sees opportunities – including widespread youth education, building a network, and harnessing the outreach potential of mass media through creative programming. For example, the Youngstars Foundation is broadcasting a television program called “Shine,” where young people debate government policy and actions.

Main Outputs (200 words, narrative form)

Participants offered many comments about their country situations, including affirmation of their own successful civil resistance, for example, the successful nonviolent movement to end of the monarchy in Nepal, which involved bringing to the table an armed insurgency. A woman from Afghanistan asked if it is possible that violent and nonviolent forces can work together and mutually reinforce one another. Panelists offered a counter question. In southern Afghanistan, where over 1,000 people recently demonstrated against the Taliban, what would have happened had the demonstration had been violent? The historic record shows that violent action limits citizen representation, increases the chances of civilian casualties, encourages military/police repression, actually legitimizes such repression, and often creates mass civilian displacement.

Through the cases presented and first-hand accounts of activists during this session, several key observations and conclusions can be drawn. Ordinary people have played and can play active roles in fighting corruption, even in “fragmented tyrannies.” These civic campaigns are grass-roots by nature, involve the poor, marginalized and uneducated, and have clear, defined objectives from which a creative set of nonviolent tactics are used, such as: demonstrations; radio programs; education and development initiatives; monitoring electoral fraud, public spending and incidents of violence; civil disobedience; and youth recreation programs. The strategic elements can include: building alliances across communities and with relevant human rights and development organizations; analyzing and targeting points of weakness and change in the corrupt system; and improving the daily lives of people. Protecting activists and citizens, and building movement resilience are critical when communities live in a setting of extreme violence. In some cases, a lack of national support – both public and political – can weaken the local movement.



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Recommendations, Follow-up Actions (200 words narrative form)

Civil resistance is by nature home-grown and bottom-up, Nevertheless, as was documented in this session, the international community – including: civil society; multilateral assistance institutions; government ministries and diplomatic missions; development and human rights organizations; and the media – has and can provide invaluable solidarity, support, know-how, and reporting.

Young people, who are often the targets of recruitment into organized violent groups such as gangs and paramilitaries, want to be part of the process of change. Citizen engagement and nonviolent civic campaigns provide an alternative sense of power, source of belonging, structure, and purpose. Education can take many forms, and young people themselves are developing innovative ways to educate and organize through the mass media and social networking. As well, youth activists and leaders should be mainstreamed into international civil society. An anti-corruption activist added that aid agencies do not engage youth.

“Children are left off at 11 years.” He saw much potential for them to become engaged and active citizens, citing a case of three 14-15 year old girls in Palestine, who exposed appalling conditions and corruption in a hospital.



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Highlights (200 words please include interesting quotes)

“Militias offer what democratic governance is supposed to offer.”

“Elected officials, traditional rulers and multinationals get stinking rich, while the people get more impoverished, suffering insecurity, poor health services, poor quality of education, high unemployment, inadequate housing, bad roads, high maternal mortality, gross human rights violations, scarcity of water, scarcity of kerosene, poor electric supply, etc.”

“Civic power involves self-reliance and the creation of alternative economic institutions. Community-based enterprises are a form of nonviolent action because they challenge the corrupt structure, and at the same time, address basic issues including hunger, employment, etc.

“We will always have to struggle against organized crime and violent non-state actors. We must be strategic in fighting corruption – including developing strategies to protect ourselves, use the legitimacy of our movement to minimize retaliation. But we know that nonviolent struggle does have costs, sorrows, and some become martyrs to the cause.”

Signed
