

Panel discussion on 07 September on the subject "Alternatives to Military Peace Measures"

Dr. Klaus Stephan Otto, Member of the Board *Forum Ziviler Friedensdienst e.V.*, reports on the objective, organization and practical work of the "forumZFD"
www.forumZFD.de

The term Civil Peace Service (Ziviler Friedensdienst) has been established in political discussions. It's understanding in detail is currently subject to a dynamic discussion process.

- Civil Peace Service focuses on the idea of strengthening an active absence from violence during times of intra-social and international conflicts and to introduce a continuous further development of this concept by institutionalizing this idea. The objective is to have qualified personnel affecting conflicts nationally and internationally on a violence reduction and prevention basis. In its name non-denominational groups and organizations are organized and cooperate.
- The Civil Peace Service addresses men and women of all ages. The minimum age is 23-25 years. Professional experience as well as experience of life are important person-related criteria for an employment within the Civil Peace Service. Therefore special skills can be expected from middle-aged people or those fairly advanced in age.
- A Civil Peace Service is only possible as a volunteer.
- Prerequisite for working in the Civil Peace Service is a qualified preparation, which includes the basic training in Civil Conflict Management. The ability to handle conflicts constructively and without violence as a third party must be learned. The forumZFD developed a curriculum for a one year training and is able to refer to the well-founded experiences from a model project in the state of North Rhine Westphalia.
- Trained and qualified personnel are usually on duty within a project for one to two years. Project executers are non-governmental organizations or international organizations which work together with local partners in conflict areas. Prerequisite to work is an invitation from the foreign partner organization. It would be most welcome that after some years of project-oriented training a pool of trained and qualified personnel is available for short-term employment.
- The Civil Peace Service considers itself the third force in a conflict, which tries to break up deadlocked communication processes between conflicting parties (mediation). He/she especially approaches social players on the intermediate and lower level. Here he/she falls back on various methods of civil conflict management and also counts on the violence reducing presence of an international observer.
- Special constellations may require organizing aid for victims, demanding compliance with human rights, fostering social and democratic processes or accompanying the reintegration of refugees and displaced persons. These situations require a special and careful preparation, since it is not easy to preserve credibly the all-party-status of qualified personnel.
- Institutionally a Civil Peace Service can be considered a cooperate association of project executers, their foreign partner organizations, and bodies responsible for training. This requires a coordination structure. forumZFD considers this task an important focus in their work.

In Germany there is a great gap between the growing demand in civil conflict management as well as prevention of crises and violence on the one hand and on the other hand the presently only very modest capacities and a rather poorly developed infrastructure in this field.