



schwelle Foundation
Contributions to Peace

HOPE IN VIOLENT TIMES ANNUAL REPORT 2023



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ANNUAL REPORT 2023

4	Introduction
6	Honoured with the Peace Award Maria Biedrawa and Connection
10	Recognising the Pain of the Others Visit to Israel and Palestine
14	Human Rights in Danger Difficult Situation in Nicaragua
16	In the Garden of Opportunities New Impulses in Bosnia
18	Hope for Earthquake Victims SOHRAM-Casra from South-East Turkey
20	From Gaza to Bosnia Stranded at the Border
22	Racism and the Church A Needed Debate



Cover picture:

Maria Biedrawa and the organisation
Connection are the winners of the
Bremen International Peace Award 2024
of the Foundation *die schwelle*.

Those Who Want Peace, Make Peace	24
World Peace Day in Bremen City Hall	
Peace Policy Challenges	26
Nonviolence In Times of Strife and War	
Thinking Outside the Box	28
Enable Discussions	
Living Room Conversations	29
A Typical <i>schwelle</i> Format	
Encouragement We didn't Need	30
43 Years of Voluntary Work at <i>schwelle</i>	
Peace Work and Digital Networking	35
Organisations in the Digital Age	
Forest of Memory	36
Individual Support 2023	
Finances 2023	37
<i>schwelle</i> Foundation	
Finances 2023	38
Foundation Shalom Diaconate	
Board of Trustees and Board of Directors	39
of <i>schwelle</i> Foundation	

Imprint:**Published by** *schwelle* Foundation – Contributions to PeaceWachmannstr. 79 | D-28209 Bremen | info@dieschwelle.de | www.dieschwelle.de/en**Editor** Petra Titze**Design** www.einfachschoen-design.de **Printing** neue Perspektiven**Images** Archive of *schwelle* or other projects or private

S. 22 Dietrich Gerstner | Back Cover Anna Rodríguez

INTRODUCTION

BY ANETTE KLASING

Dear friends of schwelle, dear readers,

«Hope in violent times»: 2023 was a year full of threatening, violent news, and not just for the *schwelle* Foundation: The war in Ukraine has continued to cost thousands of people their lives – including thousands of young Russian soldiers. The spiral of military security logic has fuelled our debate about the «right strategy» in times of strife and war. After many internal dialogue groups and discussions, the Board of Trustees of our foundation has drawn up a paper on dealing with «Nonviolence in times of strife and war». You will find it in this annual report. Our donors were also concerned with this topic: They selected the association Connection from the organisations nominated for the Award of the Donors. Connection advises and supports conscientious objectors from many countries, including young conscientious objectors from Russia, Ukraine, Turkey and Israel.

Another warlike conflict plunged us into deep horror and despair from October onwards: the Hamas massacre of over 1,000 Israeli civilians and Israel's subsequent war in Gaza, which has now cost the lives of over 32,000 people in Gaza. Some members of our foundation had previously visited Israel and Palestine in April at the invitation of our partners «Combatants for Peace» and had taken part in the Joint Memorial Ceremony, a memorial service for the victims on both sides of the conflict that has been going on for so long. 15,000 people came together there to listen to those affected on both sides who were – and still are – hopeful of finding a path to a just peace. You will find a detailed report on this trip to Israel and Palestine in this issue. Our partners «Combatants for Peace» visited Bremen three times from October onwards to talk to the Bremen public, but also to young people in schools, about the situation in Israel and Palestine.

The topic of «War and/or Peace» has accompanied us throughout 2023: Together with the Bremen City Hall, we organised an event on the World Peace Day, 21 September: «Those who want peace, make peace – non-violence as a contribution of civil society to peace». Following a welcome address by the Mayor, Dr Andreas Bovenschulte, peace researcher Prof. Dr Hanne-Margret Birckenbach and representatives from our partner organisations spoke. Read more about this in our annual report.



Anette Klasing

*has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the **schwelle** Foundation since 2007 and has been Chairwoman of the Board since 2018.*

*She has been involved in Israel and Palestine for many years and supports the **schwelle** projects in Southeast Europe and in Israel/Palestine.*

Our 2024 Peace Award Ceremony will take place at the same time as this annual report is published: In addition to the organisation Connection mentioned above, Maria Biedrawa will receive the International Peace Award. The Austrian Maria Biedrawa lives in France and has been working as a peace worker on the African continent and in various contexts and countries for 20 years. She is a trainer in non-violent conflict resolution, trauma counsellor and mediator.

Our award winners and project partners are a source of hope in times of violence: They stand for a peaceful and life-affirming path into the future. They reject hatred and violence and work tirelessly for human rights.

The articles in this annual report give an impression of the range of projects supported by our foundation worldwide as well as our activities on the ground. This work is only possible thanks to many supporters, donations and endowments.

We would like to thank all friends and supporters of *schwelle* – also on behalf of our project partners – for their solidarity.

Please continue to stand by our side!



Anette Klasing

Chairwoman of the Foundation *die schwelle*

It is our duty to question past mistakes and strive for a healthy future.

It is about breaking the cycle of violence by moving away from the attitude of «those who wish for peace, prepare for war» to the attitude of «those who wish for peace, prepare for peace».

We encounter true peace when it becomes part of our dreams and our reality – when we prepare for it

*Dan BarOn (Israeli historian)
and Saliba Sarsar (Palestinian scientist),
2006*

HONoured WITH THE PEACE AWARD MARIA BIEDRAWA AND CONNECTION

BY KAROLINE LINNERT

This year's Bremen International Peace Award of the *schwelle* Foundation goes to Maria Biedrawa for her tireless personal commitment to peace on the African continent and to the organisation Connection for its international commitment to the right to conscientious objection. Bremen's former mayor Karoline Linnert, patron of the Peace Award, will give the laudatory speech.



Karoline Linnert

was Senator for Finance and

Mayor of Bremen from 2007 to 2019.

Since 2013, she has been the patron of the

Bremen International Peace Award

*of the *schwelle* Foundation.*

Dear award winner Ms Biedrawa, dear award winners from Connection e.V., dear guests,

two years ago, I had the honour of speaking to you here on the occasion of the presentation of the last Peace Award and, as before, I would like to begin by thanking the people who support the *schwelle* Foundation. This is the 11th time that this prize has been awarded, which in itself speaks for a particular tenacity and persuasiveness. The prize is recognised and respected beyond Bremen. It helps to encourage the award winners, supports their work, gives them a sign of the appreciation they deserve and creates space for discussion. Bremen can be proud of you and grateful for your commitment to civil society. It is always an honour for me to be able to speak to you at the award ceremony and I draw new thoughts and hope from it – which we all particularly need right now.

Two years ago, the award ceremony took place shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine and many discussions were characterised by bewilderment. Until then, war had somehow seemed far away and people had the impression that the global community could somehow get a grip on local wars – only a few of them in Europe. This misconception preoccupies many people and we have to admit that there is probably only a fine line between believing in the good and not wanting to see it.

Today, we are watching the war in Ukraine continue without any realistic idea of how a ceasefire could at least be achieved. More than 80,000 Russian and Ukrainian soldiers have been killed, three times that number wounded and over 11,000 Ukrainian civilians have died in this war, including many children, and there is no end in sight. Grief, anger and helplessness about this are understandable reactions and, in my view, better than the self-assured insistence on the delivery of certain types of weapons, on immediate negotiations or relativising the question of who attacked whom.

It is undeniable that this war will only be ended through negotiations. But Ukraine is not our colony, just as it does not want to become one of Russia. However, nothing should stop German civil society from thinking about what role Russia could play in a post-war order, what co-operation and economic relations could

look like. In any case, a permanently cultivated enemy image cannot and will not bring a good future.

As if that were not enough, with the Hamas raid on three Israeli kibbutzim and a large rave party on 7 October 2023, killing over 1,200 civilians and taking 200 hostages, the Israel-Gaza war broke out with over 30,000 now dead. Since then, images of the now completely destroyed Gaza Strip have dominated the news. I don't think you can seriously deny that Israeli warfare can no longer convincingly demonstrate that revenge and delaying new elections is not also a motive. What is supposed to thrive on this? If Hamas cynically turns its own civilian population into hostages, the slim chance of a ceasefire lies precisely in not going along with this strategy, which only ever generates new hatred.

Global military spending is rising to a new high, as are the shares of the major arms manufacturers, while the ban on exports to non-democratic countries is in retreat. This is weakening national economies: In any case, this money is not being channelled into education, healthcare, infrastructure and climate protection, all of which are necessary for development and the prevention of violence.

The Peace Award seems more necessary than ever, on the other hand almost anachronistic, and it is precisely from this that it gains its strength: If Putin and Netanyahu do not listen to us, our convictions remain and they also bear fruit. Many people will not be deterred in their quest for more justice. The Peace Award is above all an «encouragement».

The *schwelle* 2024 Peace Award in the category «Pioneering Peace Work» goes to you, Ms Maria Biedrawa, for your tireless peace work in Central Africa, in countries such as Congo, Togo, Burundi, South Sudan, the Central African Republic and others.

Ms Biedrawa was born in Austria and lives in France. She is a social pedagogue and logo-therapist and has undergone further training in non-violent conflict counselling. She has been on the board of «Church and Peace» since 2018 and runs a training institute for social work in Paris. Ms Biedrawa has been working for 20 years in various African countries in the areas of trauma counselling, offers training in the principles and methods of non-violence and is an initiator and part of inter-religious encounters. The prerequisite is that they are invited by local initiatives, which are often church institutions. Against the back-ground of her Christian world view with respect and interreligious sensitivity, Ms Biedrawa attaches particular importance to involving the local population and communicating peace work in the teams formed. The cultural roots are respected and it is avoided to impose something on the people with a colonial view of the dominant culture.



Peace Award winner Maria Biedrawa works with local peace activists to promote peace and reconciliation in various African countries.



*Always with the local people,
but never in the in the foreground.
Maria Biedrawa's peace work
accompanies, supports and
motivates. It enables people to
mobilise their own strengths.*



Ms Biedrawa points out that the increase in violence in Central African states is the result of continuing colonialism and that the wealth of raw materials is at the heart of it. «Genocides, war crimes and crimes against humanity do not start with a machete, they start in the clean offices of the military, politicians and industrialists». According to your statement, the democratisation process in Africa has fallen behind by 30 years in recent years. You boldly name the role played by the major powers USA, Russia, China and the former (?) colonial power France.

I was particularly impressed by the testimony of young people from South Sudan, who explained that they cannot relate to concepts such as peace or justice «because nobody has seen that here, neither we nor our parents' or grandparents' generation». Peace workers are often persecuted and risk their own lives. It's hard to imagine the feeling of being subjected to arbitrariness, violence and a lack of rule of law for generations. Despite these experiences, Ms Biedrawa, you have clearly succeeded in awakening a longing for peace and justice and turning it into action.

The work in groups is non-violent and unarmed; it is also the aim that the perpetrators ask for forgiveness in order to interrupt the spiral of violence. For the victims, it is about «surviving conflicts, physically, mentally and emotionally». For Ms Biedrawa, in the spirit of Mahatma Gandhi, peace is not the goal, but the path. I look forward to hearing more from you about your work and what we can do to support you.

The Award of the Donors for Encouraging Initiatives goes to the organisation Connection, which clearly opposes military violence as a political tool. Connection has been campaigning internationally since 1993 to ensure that the human right to conscientious objection is enforced worldwide and supports deserters from warring countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Israel, the USA and now, as part of the «ObjectWarCampaign», from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. This involves counselling, protection from prosecution and safeguarding the right to asylum.

In 1987, the United Nations General Assembly declared conscientious objection to military service to be a universal human right – albeit without legal obligation. In 2011, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that conscientious objection to military service is covered by the European Convention on Human Rights if it is based on a «deep-rooted and sincere» conviction. Many member states do not comply with this. Ukraine has suspended the right to conscientious objection.



Peace Award winner Connection campaigns for the human right to conscientious objection and desertion. They accompany and support conscientious objectors and publicise the issue of conscientious objection.

250,000 men have fled Russia since February 2022, 22,000 from Belarus and over 200,000 men of conscription age from Ukraine. Chancellor Scholz has promised Russian men protection in Germany. 100,000 Ukrainian men have temporary legal protection in Germany – but this does not provide security. A statement by the scientific service of the German Bundestag from 16 November 2023 indicates that the right to asylum could apply more to Russian conscientious objectors, as they can be forced to commit acts against the civilian population and acts contrary to international law in the army. This may be a pragmatic approach, but it is not the recognition of a fundamental right to conscientious objection.

For me, it is an irresolvable contradiction: On the one hand, experience shows that the self-determination of peoples, the right to defence, freedom and fundamental rights too often go hand in hand with the use of armed force. As a German who owes the end of Nazi rule and a life of great security and prosperity to the deaths of many Allied soldiers, I do not want to forget this.

On the other hand, it is right that state power, including that of democratic states, must stop short of the conscientious decisions of citizens. This must also apply when the state is attacked – as is now the case in Ukraine.

Your approach is radical. You see conscientious objection as part of national defence and you are making a big leap by showing a future in which warmongers can no longer rely on finding enough people willing to sacrifice themselves for their madness. Your approach is also radically humanitarian, in that you do not want to wait until the last people have realised that wars make some rich and many dead before enforcing the right to conscientious objection and desertion. And your approach is radical because you don't get involved in the question of the reasons for war, whether a war in this situation is legitimate, just, sensible, necessary or whatever, but instead emphasise the right of the individual to decide whether they want to take part in it themselves.

You have helped many people who have left their homes to avoid having to shoot other people, who live with social ostracism and the fear of having to return. And you help us all to see the people in the wars, who are by no means all shouting Hurrah, but have internal conflicts themselves or legitimately just want to get on with their lives.

Congratulations to Ms Biedrawa and Connection for winning the *schwelle* Foundation's Peace Award. I look forward to hearing more from you in a moment.



*The *schwelle* Foundation has been organising the International Bremen Peace Award since 2003. The aim is to honour people and organisations whose work is exemplary in their commitment to peace, justice and the integrity of creation.*

Donation keyword: Peace Award

RECOGNISING THE PAIN OF THE OTHERS

VISIT TO ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

BY BÄRBEL LUDEWIG AND ANETTE KLASING

«As human beings, we share the same pain. And when we see each other, meet and talk, perhaps the flames of hatred will be extinguished, and space will be created for a little reconciliation and life.» So said Yuval Sapir, in memory of his sister Tamar on 24 April 2023 at the annual «Joint Memorial Ceremony» of Combatants for Peace and Parents Circle.



Bärbel Ludewig

*has been on the Board of Directors of the **schwelle** Foundation since 2021. The actuary and long-standing honorary treasurer of the Bremen Protestant Church takes care of the foundation's finances and is active in the Israel-Palestine group*

At the invitation of our partners «Combatants for Peace», a small delegation from *schwelle* travelled to Israel and Palestine at the end of April 2023. The date was deliberately set: On 24 April, the Joint Memorial Ceremony was held in Tel Aviv to commemorate the Israeli and Palestinian victims of the wars and the conflict. It was the eve of Israel's national day of remembrance for the soldiers killed, who are commemorated throughout the country with sirens and solemn ceremonies. The trip took place at a time of major weekly demonstrations against the far-right government and Netanyahu's so-called «judicial reform»: a reform intended to give the new government greater power over the judiciary, including the Supreme Court. At the same time, far-reaching measures were planned and in some cases already passed, which will make life even more difficult for Palestinians in the Palestinian territories occupied by Israel.

The following day, we had an appointment with Rana Salman, the Palestinian director of Combatants for Peace in Beit Jala. She told us about the successes of the Freedom School, a project for young Israelis and Palestinians. Rana was particularly pleased that young people from Nablus and Jenin had also signed up, as many young men there had become radicalised in recent months in the face of settler violence and violence by Israeli soldiers. Rana emphasised the issue: The trainings for non-violent resistance against the occupation should have a positive influence on the young people of this region.

At the «Joint Memorial Ceremony» on 24 April 2023 in Tel Aviv, the Israeli and Palestinian victims of the conflict were commemorated together. More than 15,000 Israelis and Palestinians were present. At www.dieschwelle.de you can watch a film of the event.



Humanitarian actions are another self-imposed task of the activists: In the Jordan Valley in particular, houses and even entire villages are repeatedly destroyed by the Israeli army following a «demolition order». CfP helps with reconstruction. Humanitarian aid is one thing, political public relations work is another. We later travelled with Osama Eliwat, a colleague of Rana, to the Jordan Valley, a region where Israel makes life very difficult for Palestinians and Bedouins. The Jordan Valley is the most important water area and agricultural land in the West Bank with many large greenhouses built by Israeli settlers. «Controlling water is controlling life.» We heard this phrase often. We saw a village where CfP and 200 activists had built a school and a children's playground so that 350 children would no longer have to walk for kilometres to Jericho to go to school. The Israeli military administration threatened to demolish the school and the entire village.

We travelled to Hebron with the organisation «Breaking the Silence». We started our tour in Kiryat Arba, a settler stronghold near Hebron: Here is the grave of Baruch Goldstein, who carried out a serious massacre of Palestinians in the Ibrahimi Mosque in 1994. Goldstein, a Jewish doctor and officer, killed 29 people. He was an ardent supporter of Kahana and his far-right Kach party. Today, the Israeli minister Ben-Gvir sees himself as the successor to Kahana and his Kach party. After the massacre in 1994, a curfew was imposed on the entire Palestinian population in Hebron. Hebron is now divided into two zones: H1 and H2. Most of the population lives in Hebron 1, the second largest city in the West Bank with around 230,000 Palestinians, but a few thousand also live in H2, where around 800 settlers also live.

Zone H2 is controlled by settlers and soldiers and is under Israeli administration. At peak times, there are up to 2,000 soldiers there, usually around 400. The former old town of the Palestinians, the souk, is located in this area H2. Today, H2 is a «ghost town with shuttered houses and shops, 43 Palestinian houses were evacuated and have since served as military outposts. 86 checkpoints and barriers sprawl the streets and 1500 Palestinian businesses have been closed. Hebron's settlers in H2 demonstrate their control and do not hide their aggression towards Palestinians and tourists.

In Bethlehem, we visited Dar al-Kalima University, whose president is Pastor Dr Mitri Raheb. The vibrant life of the young people was immediately noticeable as we entered the campus. Our conversation with Mitri centred on the question of the «hope and confidence of the young generation» in the face of the renewed spiral of violence in the Palestinian territories. Every day, settlers and Israeli soldiers spread fear and terror in the Palestinian villages, and almost every day there are fatalities. During our stay, a 16-year-old teenager was killed by soldiers south of Bethlehem for throwing stones at them. Mitri explained: «We should not celebrate death, but life!» People, including young people, were talking more and more about death instead of shaping life. The educational and cultural work in Dar al-Kalima means a lot in this context. The subjects and training courses teach future-oriented skills, whether in the field of interior architecture and design or in the management of organisations. We were impressed by the vibrancy and positive charisma of the young people on campus and in the rooms. Dar al Kalima has extended its programmes to Gaza: It is very important there to give hope and offer a good education.



In zone H2 in Hebron, the shops in the former Old City of the Palestinians have been cleared and sealed off.

Israeli soldiers are securing the Israeli settlements that have been established there.



Active student life was visible in the courtyard of Dar al-Kalima University. Discussing young people could be seen everywhere.

*From the exhibition «Inhabited Spaces»
WIDE HORIZONS by Ashraf Abu Amra, Gaza
The photos show the perspective of
young Palestinians in Gaza who,
despite great difficulties, hope for freedom
– and for the opportunity to discover the
«other world» that harbours their
wishes and dreams.*



The Dar al- Kalima College in Gaza is housed in a beautiful old building where young men and women are taught together. The young people in particular are eager to learn, are very familiar with the media and have a lot of creativity. We were then able to see this for ourselves with the photo exhibition that we brought back to Germany after the trip.



Anette Klasing

*has been a member of the Board of
Trustees of the **schwelle** Foundation
since 2007 and has been Chairwoman
of the Board since 2018.*

*She has been involved in Israel and
Palestine for many years and supports the
schwelle projects in Southeast Europe
and in Israel/Palestine.*

We also used our trip to meet our 2019 award winners Women Wage Peace (WWP): Angela Scharf told us that the «Mother's Call» is now very widespread and is particularly well received on social networks. WWP is part of the broad democracy movement protesting against Netanyahu's judicial reform. The national-religious forces also want to restrict women's rights, and many measures against women are already being implemented in the religious communities. Angela reported that there is now also an official Palestinian partner organisation to WWP: Women of the Sun, another organisation we visited later. The Palestinian women of this still relatively new organisation have become very active, as the fight for women's rights in Palestinian society is not easy given the occupation situation and requires a lot of courage. They want to work together with Women Wage Peace Israel, but are also calling for a joint fight against the occupation. Women Wage Peace and Women of the Sun held a large march for peace and democracy with international participation on 4 October.

We had another exciting meeting with Wi'am, the centre for non-violent conflict resolution in Bethlehem. The Wi'am centre with its director Zoughbi Alzoughbi has been working professionally in the field of conflict counseling and conflict moderation for many years. Zoughbi himself is a trained «Sulha» facilitator. Sulha is a widespread traditional Arab conflict mediation method that is still frequently practised in Palestine. Decades of Israeli occupation and humiliation also lead to escalations within society and to domestic violence. Zoughbi said that it was very important to deal with the conflicts within society. Of course they are also fighting against the occupation, but in order to be able to lead a non-violent resistance properly, the conflicts within their own society must also be dealt with.

Training young people in non-violent conflict resolution is important to the centre. They should act as future mediators in their communities. The so-called peace camp on the Palestinian side is very weak, as the aggressive occupation policy of recent years has led to a lot of resignation, frustration and violence. For this reason, they are currently less interested in dialogue with Israelis than in reducing violence, reducing hatred and

enmity and building hope. The preparation of encounters and dialogue would then come afterwards, which would have to take place on an equal footing. Zoughbi said that hope was still there and referred to role models such as South Africa, Northern Ireland and Germany (fall of the Berlin Wall and reunification).

Now, after 7 October 2023, our partners and friends in Israel and Palestine are in a major crisis in view of the Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians and the terrible war in Gaza with tens of thousands of people killed. Since October 2023, Rotem Levin and Osama Eliwat from Combatants for Peace have visited us three times in Bremen to make it clear that they will not give up in their fight for non-violent paths to peace. They appealed to us Germans: right now it is important to support peace work in Israel and Palestine, because unfortunately courageous examples of these initiatives are presented far too rarely in our media. We at the *schwelle* Foundation see it as our task to strengthen and support the peace camp. Peace without justice is not real peace, and this also includes a life in freedom - without occupation.

INHABITED SPACES

EA PHOTO EXHIBITION BY DAR AL-KALIMA UNIVERSITY BETHLEHEM

The photos in the exhibition «Inhabited Spaces» were taken in 2022 by young photo artists in the Palestinian territories of the West Bank and Gaza. They show everyday life before 7 October 2023, before the Hamas massacre of Israeli civilians and the subsequent war by the Israeli army in Gaza. The photo exhibition is the result of a competition organised by the photography department at Dar al-Kalima University in Bethlehem.

The exhibition was shown in March and April in Bremen and will be shown again in November in the church «Unser Lieben Frauen». It will also be shown in other cities in Germany.



Zoughbi Alzoughbi, the director of the Wi'am Centre, is committed to traditional non-violent conflict resolution in Palestine and trains young people in non-violent conflict resolution.

The schwelle Foundation has been supporting peace organisations in Israel and Palestine for many years.

We currently have a cooperative partnership with Combatants for Peace. They need support for their peace work

Donation keyword: Combatants for Peace, Israel / Palestine

*From the exhibition «Inhabited Spaces»
A FICTIONAL STORY: This photo by Shadi Tabatiti shows young people at football training in the Palestine Stadium in Gaza. They are training there despite their physical disabilities caused by previous wars.*

HUMAN RIGHTS IN DANGER

DIFFICULT SITUATION IN NICARAGUA

BY BEATE LÖWE-NAVARRO

The human rights situation in Nicaragua has deteriorated further in 2023. Many young people are leaving the country, the future prospects of democratic public institutions are being undermined and non-governmental organisations are encountering more and more obstacles in their work. While the repression of all sectors of society continues, the control mechanisms for the expropriation of civil society institutions and organisations in particular have been strengthened.

The following information comes mainly from our former project partner in Nicaragua, the women's collective «Colectivo de Mujeres» from Matagalpa, which actively campaigns for women's and children's rights even under extremely problematic circumstances.

The arbitrary arrests continued in January and February 2024 and 17 employees of the Catholic Church were expatriated. 121 people recognised as political prisoners remain in custody, including 19 women. Most of them are accused of 'harming national integrity' and 'spreading false news'. By January 2024, more than 3,560 non-governmental organisations had been closed, including 286 women's groups, as well as church and medical institutions and international aid organisations. In August 2023, the Jesuit-run Central American University (Universidad Centroamericana) had to cease its activities. At least 57 media organisations have been closed and 208 journalists have gone into exile since 2018. In view of the ongoing socio-political crisis, the total number of displaced persons rose to 804,000 by the end of 2023, which corresponds to 11.34% of the country's population. In the economic sector, forecasts focus on an increase in family remittances from abroad, which, given the lack of jobs and low wages, keep households afloat and ensure that families at least have something to eat.

The government has not published any figures on violence against women or femicides for 2022 and 2023. According to various media outlets, a total of 74 femicides were recorded in 2023, and so far this year (as of March 2024) there have been five, three of them in the municipalities of Matagalpa. There are also still problems with the total ban on abortion and attacks against the autonomous administrations of the indigenous and black communities on the Atlantic coast. In addition, there is general impunity for serious human rights violations.



Beate Löwe-Navarro

has been a member of the *schwelle* board of trustees since 2011. The interpreter and specialist for international communication is active in the *schwelle*'s Latin America group and interprets at international meetings.



In this climate of general instability, the Matagalpa Women's Collective continued to support the three rural communities that still carry out activities with women and children and promoted the organisation and development of six educational play spaces for urban children.

In private premises, the women's collective also maintains gynaecological healthcare and care for pregnant women. Other activities include emotional support for women, in person or via the internet, as well as legal guidance in legal disputes and, in some cases, family counselling. Through monthly improv theatre, the women in the collective maintain support in various emotional situations and strengthen each other. As some of them now live scattered abroad, the improv theatre takes place via Zoom. Despite the extremely limited scope for action, the women's collective continued its information and communication work with radio programmes and messages via the internet and social networks.

VILMA NÚÑEZ DE ESCORCIA

In February 2023, the state revoked the nationality and citizenship rights 'for life' of 94 Nicaraguans accused of the alleged crime of 'treason'. In addition, the confiscation of all of the defendants' properties was ordered. Among those affected is Vilma Núñez de Escorcía, Chairwoman of the Nicaraguan Centre for Human Rights (CENIDH), who received the Bremen International Peace Award from the *schwelle* Foundation in 2019 for her commitment to human rights in Nicaragua.

As a foundation, we joined a spontaneously formed solidarity and support group made up of various human rights groups and individuals in Germany and supported the demand to the Nicaraguan government to withdraw the charges against the 94 people and return their citizenship rights and property to them.

Unlike most of those affected, who have since left the country, Vilma Núñez is determined to remain in Nicaragua at all costs. We are monitoring further developments in order to organise activities together with other organisations and individuals to support Vilma Núñez if the situation deteriorates further.

In November 2023, Vilma Núñez celebrated her 85th birthday, for which we sent her our warmest congratulations on behalf of *schwelle*.

In rural communities in Nicaragua, supporting women and children means preventing violence, encouraging them and empowering them.



Vilma Núñez de Escorcía at the 2019 Peace Award Ceremony with laudator Luise Scherf

IN THE GARDEN OF OPPORTUNITIES NEW IMPULSES IN BOSNIA

BY SUSANNE KORHAMMER



Susanne Korhammer

has been a member of the schwelle board of trustees since 2009. The managing director of an engineering office for energy efficiency and regenerative energy utilisation is involved in schwelle's Southeast Europe AG.



Funding from the Schmitz Foundations

schwelle has submitted a funding application for CIM to the Schmitz Foundations.

After approval, schwelle supported the implementation and coordinated the application process.

With this support, CIM was able to access over 30,000 Euros in funding, which was used to renovate an existing building into a conference and accommodation centre and to construct an outdoor sports field. Workshops were held on peacebuilding, reconciliation, conflict resolution, teamwork, non-violent communication, permaculture and the sustainable use of natural resources.

The Centre for Peacebuilding (CIM) has been committed to reconciliation and peace work in Bosnia for 20 years. The aim is to use peace work with young people to narrow the rifts between the population groups created by the war in the 1990s and to help Bosnian Croats, Serbs and Bosniaks to live together peacefully and as neighbours again.

Ever since Imam Vahidin Omanović received the *schwelle* Foundation's Peace Award in 2011, there has been continuous cooperation. The CIM Peace Centre, which he founded with Imam Mevludin Rahmanović in 2004 in Sanski Most, a small town in the north of Bosnia-Herzegovina, carries out a wide range of activities in the field of peace work. For many years, CIM has been training young people from all over Bosnia to become peace ambassadors and has been publicising the topics of peace and reconciliation to society through international guests, lectures and events.

The Garden of Opportunities, a 13-hectare plot of land just outside the small town of Sanski Most, forms the base for the work and a centre of strength. Peace camps, International Peace Weeks and other public events were organised here. Until now, the events have been held outdoors, with overnight stays in tents. As part of the funding provided by the Schmitz Foundations, a building on the site that was still under construction was converted into a seminar centre with overnight accommodation.

The aim of the funding project was to expand the catchment area of the Garden of Opportunities and, together with the citizens of Sanski Most (especially young people), to create a place that facilitates encounters, offers a safe space to get to know people who were «enemies» during the civil war, provides access to nature and thus supports peace and reconciliation in society.





By making a long-term commitment to the farm and getting actively involved, young people take responsibility for themselves and society.

With this in mind, workshops were organised as part of the funding project to raise awareness of permaculture and the sustainable use of natural resources. Workshops on peacebuilding, reconciliation, conflict resolution, teamwork and non-violent communication were organised for future peace ambassadors and schools. The expansion of the house with overnight accommodation means that participants can be accommodated in a permanent house. This, combined with CIM's many years of work and its good reputation in youth work, means that many young people have shown an interest in the work and are happy to come and explore the Garden of Opportunities. The link with Sanski Most is being strengthened, with school classes from Sanski Most now taking part in multi-day seminars in the Garden of Opportunities, focussing on nature conservation, global warming and other ecological issues.

The project opens up many new possibilities for the future. CIM is now in a position to host long-term volunteers. Towards the end of the project period, a cooperation with the German organisation, Friedenskreis Halle, was started and two German volunteers were accepted for a period of twelve months.

Bosnian organisations will also continue to use the Garden of Opportunities for their work. The aim is to establish cooperation with all eight schools in Sanski Most. A cooperation has also been agreed with the local retirement home «Zlatna Jesen», which is run by *schwelle* project partner Fenix, thanks to which the residents will be able to experience nature in a variety of ways during excursions to the Garden of Opportunities.

The two founders of CIM (Vahidin Omanović and Mevludin Rahmanović) are delighted that the project will enable them to gradually realise their goal of making the Garden of Opportunities visible and usable for the general public as a safe place for peace activities, leisure and family/group gatherings. They are happy that the Peace Ambassadors, who now work in nine Bosnian cities, including Sarajevo and Mostar, have a place where they can meet, exchange ideas and receive further training regardless of the weather. An important result of the project is that they have reported back that they feel very motivated by the project and the cooperation with *schwelle* and the Schmitz Foundations to continue developing an exemplary place of peace and nature, because they have learnt that there are foundations that have the same view of the relevance of their work as they do.

CIM organises workshops in local schools and during the International Peace Week. Participants learn about reconciliation and share how their families were affected during the war in the 1990s and how to deal with the brain drain process taking place in Bosnia.



Workshop on permaculture and sustainable use of natural resources

CIM held workshops on caring for the soil without using chemicals, vegetable varieties that can grow in the local climate zone, planting and harvesting times, good neighbourliness between plants and collecting and storing seeds. Many young people worked together on the project throughout the season, visiting schools and sharing their insights with local students. After the first workshops, the impact was immediately visible as the number of volunteers in CIM's Volunteer Club tripled.

HOPE FOR EARTH- QUAKE VICTIMS SOHRAM-CASRA FROM SOUTHEAST TURKEY

BY BRITTA RATSCH-MENKE AND HANNES MENKE



Britta Ratsch-Menke

has been a member of the schwelle board of trustees since 2005. After spending several years in Togo, she has become an active member of the Foundation's Africa and Turkey working group.



Hannes Menke

has been a member of the schwelle board of trustees since 2012. In addition to his involvement in the working group «Rethinking security», he is also active in schwelle's Africa and Turkey working group.

The earthquake in southeast Turkey on February 6, 2023 was so catastrophic that it hit eleven cities with 15 million inhabitants and destroyed over 200,000 buildings. Above all, it destroyed the unstable houses in the poor neighbourhoods. According to official figures, 50,956 people lost their lives, a figure that is certainly lower than the actual number.

The region on the border with Syria is home to many people who have had to flee their homes — on the one hand from the war zone in Syria, but also internally displaced persons who have fled the rural regions to escape fighting between the Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) and the Turkish army. The hardship that followed the earthquake hit the refugees particularly hard. They worked as day labourers and were no longer able to earn a living and therefore urgently needed help. However, only Turkish citizens were entitled to official state aid.

With the modest resources available to SOHRAM-Casra, three teams of volunteers organised emergency aid in the form of food, shopping vouchers, extra baby food, accommodation in a tent or with host families and access to their second-hand shop.

Despite its own financial difficulties, SOHRAM was able to continue the aid it had started with its own funds thanks to additional support from Provicimis, the schwelle Foundation, the Bremen Protestant Church, the Canadian Embassy in Ankara and other donors.

SOHRAM REPORTS ON CONCRETE MEASURES:

- Our SOHRAM-Casra centre is the only organisation in the region that offers psychotherapeutic help. We have therefore started to offer free psychotherapeutic treatment to the earthquake victims: Counselling sessions with psychologists, therapies and information events with activities such as drawing and painting with children. We have employed an additional psychologist for this purpose. 176 people, including 84 children, asked for psychological support and sought the help of our psychologists.
- We took in 19 Chaldean and Aramaic families from our region in the city of Antakya, which was severely affected by the earthquake. 97 private individuals and the Mar Petrun church in Diyarbakir have taken in earthquake victims. A total of 792 people were supported with accommodation and food.

- If necessary, a caterer was hired to provide 200 meals a day. In addition, 216 food parcels and 450 shopping vouchers were distributed.
- It was winter and very cold and we were able to distribute 300 blankets to earthquake victims in need.

SOHRAM-CASRA also organised information events at its centre under the motto «Protection from earthquakes».

A girl from the education programme reports: «Before we got help, my father and all the other family members were desperate. As I am in the SOHRAM programme to support my education, SOHRAM was also able to help my family when my father had no income because of the earthquake. My family values my education and I thank God for SOHRAM's support to my family in their time of need.»

A boy who is also taking part in the education programme: «My father worked in a restaurant on a daily basis, but the restaurant was closed due to the earthquake. My father couldn't go to work. My mum says that if SOHRAM doesn't help us, we won't have any food at home.»

Yavus Binbay, Chairman of SOHRAM-Casra writes:

«SOHRAM has been involved in interfaith dialogue in Diyarbakir for many years. Now, during the hardship caused by the earthquake, we have been able to experience how sustainable and helpful these established relationships are. In a country where the majority of people are Muslim and where there are several cultural and religious minorities, we have tried to build a bridge between the different cultures and religions by getting Christian churches involved in helping earthquake victims. This goal is very important in an environment where we are confronted with inter-ethnic and religious conflicts. The organisation of Mar Petrun Church as a shelter for earthquake victims and my discussions with the media in this regard have raised the visibility of our Christian brothers and sisters who live together as citizens with Muslims in our region. We believe that our activities will have a positive impact in the future.

We would like to sincerely thank the *schwelle* Foundation for the funds we were able to use to help those affected by the earthquake.»



SOHRAM-Casra organises support in the form of food, clothing and shelter for people who have lost everything in the earthquake.



SOHRAM-Casra is a centre for rehabilitation, social aid and support for Turkish and Syrian refugees and peace work. It is the only centre in the region that offers legal and psychological support to victims of torture and violence and helps them to deal with trauma.

Donation keyword: SOHRAM-Casra, Turkey

FROM GAZA TO BOSNIA

STRANDED AT THE BORDER

BY RIC FERNANDEZ

No Name Kitchen (NNK), a partner organisation of *schwelle*, supports people who are stranded at the heavily secured external border when trying to enter the EU. Last year, Ric Fernández from NNK travelled to the places where people repeatedly try to enter the EU and apply for asylum and where NNK is active. He talks about a family he met on this trip.



Ric Fernández

and others founded the organisation No Name Kitchen. He is the coordinator of NNK and responsible for finances, partnerships and programme development.

She's a tiny woman. Tender eyes. He's as thin as a stick. He's not wearing a coat, even though it's raining and cold. Their daughter is six years old and she amuses herself with almost everything. That's what little ones have, that they don't need much to escape from reality. Having spent her whole life in the Gaza Strip must have trained her to ignore suffering.

They are traveling with a Lebanese boy they met in Lesbos. (For those migrating from the Middle East, Lesbos is a bit like Facebook was in 2015, a place where everyone is, or has been, soliciting new friendships).

The four of them, standing on the street, look at the house they have just been kicked out of. It is a typical house of northern Bosnia: with a gabled roof, two floors, a loft, a lot of unrendered brick, and broken windows with no hope of being repaired. It is next to the road linking Velika Kladuša to Croatia — not the one leading to the official border, but the one that ends at a small border crossing only for locals. Opposite, there is the road leading to the castle. The only hot spot in the city.

She's pregnant. She wears a kind of scarf over her head, but she takes it off and puts it on as she talks; nothing religious about it; merely a tool against the cold. «When we managed to get out of Gaza, we thought nothing could

Volunteers from many countries work free of charge at the various NNK locations. They distribute food and clothing, deal with injuries and document illegal push-backs at the border. And they show humanity in inhumane situations.





stop us», she says. «But now I think the Croatian commandos are worse than the Israelis, haha.» God!, and she still laughs.

They have spent all their life savings to get out of Palestine. They have crossed Syria in the middle of the war. They arrived in Turkey, embarked in Izmir risking their lives, arrived in Lesbos, were flown to Athens, from there they went up to Macedonia, crossed into Bulgaria, stayed in a camp for eight months, asked their family for more money, hired a taxi driver to reach Serbia first, and then Bosnia, and after two years of crossing, with a pregnancy on the way, they met a group of Croatian policemen who made them kneel on the ground. He and his Lebanese friend had Rottweiler dogs breathing into their faces.

«I peed myself, haha», says the Lebanese boy, laughing nervously. They snatched off her veil. They scared the hell out of the little girl forever. They put them in a van and drove them back to the Bosnian border, into the forest, and told them to go back, to cross the frozen river and go back. «In Gaza we are afraid of Israeli bombs, but at least we had a house», he says, visibly worried about the lack of shelter for the night.

The ego of male fragility, so visible on the migration routes, where the heads of families sink into the guilt of not being able to provide a solution to something that is not in their hands. When they returned to Bosnia, they came to this house, which, to be honest, is not the typical block in ruins, abandoned by its owners. This house has furniture, a fire for cooking with wood, and a bathroom — with no running water, but a bathroom, nonetheless.

Being a family, and with such a small child, they decided to sleep there until they would find a better solution. Usurpation of a home, some would say. Resilience to power, for the rest of us. Two days later, that is, today, the police arrived. They gave them a paper with the smell of a fine and took their backpacks out into the street, amid shouts and bad manners.

Here they are. From Gaza to Bosnia.

People seeking protection in an EU country often take months to cross the heavily secured external border.

Many die in the attempt, some never make it.

Many people get stranded at the border: Men, women and children who try again and again to cross this line, and they struggle to survive.

*This is where the work of **schwelle** project partner «No Name Kitchen» starts.*



No Name Kitchen is there where people need support: sometimes more at the Bosnian-Croatian border, sometimes at the Serbian-Hungarian border, in Bulgaria or in Ceuta, the Spanish exclave surrounded by Morocco. As a small, independent organisation, NNK can react quickly to changing refugee routes.

*The **schwelle** Foundation has been supporting the organisation No Name Kitchen since 2019. They need support to help people on the move.*

Donation keyword: No Name Kitchen

RACISM AND THE CHURCH

A NEEDED DEBATE

BY ANTJE HEIDER-ROTTWILM, MARIA BIEDRAWA, ELISABETH FREISE

Racism is growing in our European societies. Churches need to ask themselves how they have contributed to racism, discrimination, and slavery. «Overcoming racism in the church» was the theme of this year's Church and Peace conference in Baarlo, Netherlands.



Nearly 100 people from 15 European and non-European countries came to the conference. People of colour, affected by racism, contributed their experiences and analyses as speakers during plenary sessions and in workshops. «Being made in God's image means that we have been created to be in relationship with others,» said Yawo Kakpo, a pastor and professor from Togo, «because at the end of the day, it's all about enabling everyone to participate in social life and to access social, cultural, political, economic, and spiritual resources on an equal footing.» But it is precisely this that creates fear among rich Christians in the Global North – fear of losing their own privileges. Theology and churches must therefore address this split between rich and poor by addressing their colonial heritage and making visible the persistence of colonialism today.

Adejare Oyewole from London, treasurer of the Churches' Commission for Migrants in Europe (CCME), pointed out that overcoming racism has been a central concern of the ecumenical movement since its beginnings. «The first Assembly of the World Council of Churches (WCC) in Amsterdam in 1948 recognized that «prejudice based on race or colour» and «practices of discrimination and segregation» are «a denial of justice and human dignity». «It is in this context that CCME emerged as an anti-racism campaigning organisation of European churches, advocating for all persons made in God's image to be treated with respect and seen as neighbours rather than «the others».

CCME's work confronts us with the concrete experience of people from migrant churches. This includes the fact that discrimination is increasing to the same extent that hostility towards refugees is growing. «The issue of racism is very broad in Europe,» Oyewole said, «going from the situation of Roma in Europe to the treatment of indigenous populations, right into the history of colonialism, and the intersection between racism, and discrimination of migrants.» Oyewole warned, «The perception that mission can only be done by the powerful to the powerless, by the rich to the poor, or by the privileged to the marginalised contributes to the oppression and marginalisation of global majority people.» Instead, mission is about sharing resources, viewing each other as equal partners, and witnessing together. And migrants must be included in the leadership of mainline churches and ecumenical bodies.

The schwelle Foundation made it possible for the Togolese pastor and professor Professor Yawo Kakpo to take part in the conference as a speaker. Among other things, he led a workshop on the topic of «(Neo)colonialism and its effects on racism - from an African perspective» He contributed his many years of experience in his commitment to political reconciliation processes in West Africa and for the promotion of peace and security in the region.



Nicole Ashwood, programme executive for Just Communities of Women and Men of the WCC, and her colleague, Thandi Soko de Jong from the Netherlands, recalled: «Starting in 1969, the WCC through the Programme to Combat Racism, was actively engaged in and recognized for its influence in bearing spiritual and political pressure through its member churches and by the tireless work of individuals for the end of apartheid in South Africa... What this has meant is that people of all races, classes, and ethnicities have worked assiduously as advocates and activists, risking life and limb, but never their faith, to ensure that the visible unity of the WCC is manifested in the pluralistic representation of peoples created in the imago Dei.» The two speakers referred to the 2004 Accra Confession, which states, «Therefore we reject any ideology or economic regime that puts profits before people, does not care for all creation and privatizes those gifts of God meant for all.» With the relaunched 2023 programme «Overcoming Racism, Xenophobia and Related Discrimination» «we are nevertheless closer to transformation, even if the goal has not yet been achieved,» Ashwood said.

Transformation – that is the challenge we want to face as Church and Peace. We want to allow ourselves to feel the fear of being disturbed or irritated and nevertheless to be woken up whenever we are not aware of our racism or discriminatory behaviour. People who have been subjected to discrimination spoke of the thousand small pinpricks of racism. «As individuals, we can and want to counter this with a thousand small steps of love, said Yawo Kakpo in his sermon during the closing worship.

If we are to truly move forward, we must first step out of our comfort zone and face the questions that were put to us by Dr Masiwa Ragies Gunda, WCC programme executive for Programmatic Responses on Overcoming Racism:

- What do we fear about being equal to and with other people?
- Is heaven so small that we fear space will run out before we have our own space?
- Is the earth so poor that its resources are not enough for all of us?
- Is the grace of God in such limited supply that we fear it will run out, if it has to be shared among all the children of God?
- Why do we fear justice, equality, and fairness?



Antje Heider-Rottwilm, Elisabeth Freise and Maria Biedrawa

are on the board of Church and Peace. The European ecumenical network is supported by peace churches, Christian communities, parishes, training centres, peace organisations and peace services.

The schwelle Foundation has been a member of Church and Peace since it was founded and supports the network as a project partner.

It is usually represented at the annual international conferences that take place at different locations.

Managing Director Petra Titze took part in Baarlo.

THOSE WHO WANT PEACE, MAKE PEACE WORLD PEACE DAY IN BREMEN CITY HALL

BY ANETTE KLASING

On 21 September 2023, the UN World Peace Day, *schwelle* and Church and Peace jointly hosted an information event entitled «Nonviolence as a contribution of civil society to peace». 150 people took part and discussed the need to actively shape peace and initiate encounters at eye level.



«When national governments no longer talk but wage war, when nationalist and anti-democratic tendencies grow stronger at national level, then cities must stay in contact, network and work together to find solutions to global challenges», said Bremen's mayor Andreas Bovenschulte

The 2023 World Day of Peace event was based on our partner conference, which took place in October 2022: representatives of our partner organisations were invited to a discussion with Dr Lang, Head of the International Relations Department at Bremen City Hall. Among other things, we discussed with her the significance of the day established by the United Nations on 21 September. According to the United Nations, the World Peace Day is intended to strengthen the idea of peace between countries and peoples and to be a day of ceasefire and non-violence. Immediately after our partner conference, we began to think about how we could publicise our cause of peace work, especially in times of strife and war.

Bremen's Mayor Dr. Andreas Bovenschulte opened the event, which was also livestreamed in German and English, and spoke about the opportunities and limitations of the city of Bremen in contributing to peace. He emphasised the importance of Bremen's newly established city partnership with the Ukrainian city of Odessa and explained that Bremen is active in the international «Mayors for Peace» network. «Cooperation between municipalities and regions and exchange at civil society level are important for international understanding and global solidarity. When national governments no longer talk but wage war, when nationalist and anti-democratic tendencies grow stronger at national level, then cities must stay in contact, network and work together to find solutions to global challenges», said the mayor.



In her brief academic input, Prof. Dr. Hanne-Margret Birckenbach, peace researcher and winner of the Göttingen Peace Award 2023, presented the concept of peace logic and the «peace logic handprint», which shows the five principles of action that promote peace (prevention of violence, conflict transformation, dialogue compatibility, norm-oriented development of interests, error-friendliness).

The moderator Dirk Asendorpf then led us through the rest of the evening. Three peace activists from our partner organisations presented their work: Rana Salman from Combatants for Peace in Palestine (joined via Zoom) reported on the difficult peace work in an ongoing violent conflict. Combatants for Peace is a peace movement founded jointly by Israelis and Palestinians, which is committed to a peaceful solution to the Middle



East conflict and works non-violently to end the Israeli occupation in the Palestinian territories. «It is important to build trust between people on both sides,» said Rana Salman. This is done through meetings, workshops and training sessions. It is important to show the outside world that it is possible to work together in a spirit of trust and on an equal footing. Then these activities could also have an impact on the wider community. It is also important to allow different perspectives on the past and to discuss them together. If the painful developments in other societies are recognised and acknowledged, a rapprochement can take place.

Otto Raffai from the RAND organisation was able to confirm this for his work in Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina: Since the war in the 1990s, the societies in both countries have been torn apart and the different population groups segregated. In Bosnia in particular, a renewed outbreak of violence is to be feared at any time. He also emphasised the importance and necessity of meetings at eye level so that social traumas of the past do not lead to new violence. Specifically, he reported on their work to actively support believers of different faiths in using their spirituality for a just peace and not to follow nationalist religious leaders. Recently, they have also been working with local politicians on the challenges of anchoring non-violence in politics and society.

Mirka Hurter from Peace for Future reported on her work to motivate young people for peace work. «Younger people often feel powerless in the face of the current world situation,» she said. Together with her team, she developed a concept for training and workshops, especially for the target group «young people». Using the peer-to-peer approach, they were able to transform this feeling of powerlessness into active action.

In the discussion that followed, the speakers emphasised how important peace work is right now, knowing full well that only small changes are possible. Although the goals and concerns are similar, our partners are dealing with very different contexts and therefore work with different tools and methods.



At the subsequent reception in the town hall, the guests were able to talk to the speakers.



Anette Klasing

has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the schwelle Foundation since 2007 and has been Chairwoman of the Board since 2018.

She has been involved in Israel and Palestine for many years and supports the schwelle projects in Southeast Europe and in Israel/Palestine.

PEACE POLICY CHALLENGES

NONVIOLENCE IN TIMES OF STRIFE AND WAR

FROM THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF SCHWELLE FOUNDATION

The Russian government's war against Ukraine has occupied the Board of Directors and Board of Trustees in various ways since the beginning of 2022. It was very helpful that we were able to deal openly with different attitudes and positions, with ambiguity and dilemmas in the face of the peace policy challenge that this – and so many other – wars pose for us.

In August 2023, we recorded the result of our reflections in the text «Non-violence in times of strife and war». Hamas' brutal attack on Israel and the Israeli government's subsequent war against Hamas in the Gaza Strip challenged us once again to consider our stance on non-violence. The text was therefore written against the backdrop of the war against Ukraine, but is not limited to this.

LEVEL 1: VALUES AND ATTITUDES

- the *schwelle* strives for non-violence in all conflicts.
- The right to sovereignty and self-determination includes the right to self-defence by military means in the event of an attack (see Article 51 of the UN Charter).
- The right to self-defence with weapons does not contradict a peace ethic committed to non-violence, but is its exception.
- The exceptional case does not override the principle of non-violence. Rather, it must be subject to clear ethical conditions for all parties involved in acts of war in self-defence. E.g. proportionality: The extent of the loss of human life and destruction must be in a justifiable proportion to the desired goal of restoring sovereignty and self-determination.
- In the face of state coercion, the individual's right to non-violence, for example through conscientious objection or flight, must be recognised and supported.
- Even in the event of war, peace ethics principles must be enforced through negotiations at all levels in order to break through the supposed lack of alternatives to arms deliveries.
- The right to self-determination and the justified security needs and interests of all (!) parties involved must be recognised and taken into account in order to achieve common security.



The meetings of the Board of the Board of Trustees are a place of intensive work and passionate discussions. The text published here is the result of many rounds of discussion.

LEVEL 2: ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION

- It is the aim of the *schwelle* to deal with conflicts from a variety of perspectives in order to promote peace and to contribute to their analysis and discussion in public. One-sided, unreflected partisanship contradicts this interest in opening up spaces for discussion and critically analysing the actions of all warring parties (e.g. war crimes, sabotage).
- In academic and cultural exchange, voices from other countries can lead out of narrow perspectives: historical, cultural and future-orientated. *schwelle* incorporates the international perspectives of its project partners. It resists limiting itself to emotionally charged issues (such as arms deliveries) and focuses on the prospects of a lasting peace order.
- Findings from peace research and concepts of international cooperation enable in-depth analyses of the causes of conflicts and a differentiation of power structures based on political interests. *schwelle* reflects these findings from research and contributes to their dissemination in discussions, conferences and panel events.

LEVEL 3: PRACTICAL SUPPORT

- *schwelle* is committed to the protection of refugees and opposes the marginalisation and hostility of people and groups, as well as the demonisation or heroisation of one side or the other.
- It supports the opening of (cultural) spaces for hostile groups and promotes their exchange, including in intercultural dialogue. It stands in solidarity with creative artists in their autonomy and independence from war propaganda.
- *schwelle* supports conscientious objectors and deserters and connects with networks that are active in this area. It brings the issue of asylum for people from war zones who have avoided military service by fleeing to the attention of politicians and the public.
- *schwelle* supports people who campaign against war and violence and in favour of human rights. Special attention is paid to people who are threatened in authoritarian regimes because of their commitment.

LEVEL 4: POLITICAL-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION

- In order to achieve its peace policy goals, the *schwelle* exchanges information with other organisations and initiatives and participates in networks and campaigns.
- It communicates its peace policy stance, values and current reflections in its media (annual report, flyer, newsletter, website) and organises events for this purpose.
- It cooperates with organisations whose goals and working methods are in line with its own principles of international understanding and solidarity with the disadvantaged. This excludes cooperation if a simplified scheme of good and evil is taken as a basis, if the dignity and human rights of all those involved in a conflict are not respected, or if hatred or nationalism dominate the discourse.

The *schwelle* Foundation is a member of the Rethinking Security network. In November 2023, the network published a new impulse paper: «Rethinking security strategies: stopping and overcoming violence! In Israel and Palestine. In the Ukraine. Globally.»

This paper is also being discussed intensively in the *schwelle*.

www.sicherheitneudenken.de

Concrete Realisations

On September 21, 2023, *schwelle* held an event at Bremen City Hall to mark the UN World Peace Day:

«Those who want peace, make peace – non-violence as a contribution of civil society to peace.»

From April to June 2024, the *schwelle* Foundation is organising the event series **«Peace Logic Perspectives in Times of War»**

More information at www.dieschwelle.de/en



Eckart Behm

is involved in the *schwelle* from 2012 to 2024. The lawyer is still active in the working group *Rethinking Security*.



above:

Imam Ouasselegue, Reverend Siribi, presenter Hannes Menke and Marie-Noelle Koyara from the Central African Republic.

below:

Prof. Thomas Heberer and presenter Eckart Behm



THINKING OUTSIDE THE BOX

ENABLE DISCUSSIONS

BY ECKART BEHM

The *schwelle* Foundation organised several public events in 2023 to discuss political issues with a large audience: On 21 September, we hosted the World Day of Peace at City Hall (see p. 24), in October we spoke with Palestinian and Israeli activists (see p. 13), and we invited people to discuss with experts the situation in China and in the Central African Republic.

INSPIRATION FROM THE CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC

The Chairman of the «Platform of Confessions in the Central African Republic» (PCRC), Imam Ouasselegue, the Protestant Reverend Siribi and the President of the «National Council for Active Non-Violence», former Minister Marie-Noelle Koyara, came to Bremen on 16 October as part of a trip to Germany.

They reported from one of the most fragile and least developed countries in the world. Since the beginning of the civil war in 2013, Christians and the Muslim minority, who had lived together harmoniously for decades, have been drawn into a bloody conflict. Religious affiliation has been misused in the struggle for power in the country.

In order to end the violence, prominent representatives of the major religions have founded the interfaith platform PCRC and are working in society in many ways, e.g. with educational events, journalistic training and public appeals for the disarmament of rival groups.

We were impressed by their courage for non-violence, by their optimism and perseverance in a situation that is difficult in every respect, by their openness and warmth. It was an encouraging evening.

LET'S TALK ABOUT CHINA

On 10 February 2023, Prof. Thomas Heberer from the University of Duisburg-Essen spoke in the well-attended Domkapitelsaal in Bremen on the topic of «China's internal constitution and domestic political logic - an assessment». He dealt with China's development vision up to 2050 and the existing domestic and foreign policy problem areas, the importance of the state as a «developmental state» and the moral order, to name just a few keywords.

Thomas Heberer proved to be an excellent expert and spoke with critical sympathy about the country, which he has been travelling to regularly since 1975.

LIVING ROOM CONVERSATIONS

A TYPICAL SCHWELLE FORMAT

BY JENNIFER KAUTHER

They are never publicly announced because they differ from our other events in their more informal setting: the Living Room Talks.

They take place two or three times a year. The occasion is often a visit from our project partners. Or a topic that is close to our hearts and that we would like to discuss. And sometimes we need a more intimate setting and protected space for our discussions, where we can talk and ask questions in person. And so a member of the Board of Trustees invites us to her or his home and also provides us with refreshments. The hospitality we experience in this way is something precious and contributes greatly to the special atmosphere inherent in these discussions.

In addition to the members of the Board of Trustees, interested guests such as the people who work in the project groups or close friends of *schwelle* sometimes join in. Everyone finds this format enriching. And for our project partners, this gives *schwelle* a face — or rather many faces — beyond the office. The genuine interest in each other becomes tangible. For me, these discussions embody the special spirit that characterises our peace foundation.

In November 2023, the Chilean composer and songwriter Jacqueline Castro came to Beate Löwe-Navarro's living room. She is closely associated with our former project partner Cintras in Santiago and spoke about the fight for justice and democracy in Chile. She uses her music to campaign for human rights. During the living room concert, she sang parts of her composition «Cantata Chacabuco memoria viva», a tribute to the former prisoners in the Chacabuco concentration camp and the women who supported the prisoners there during the Chilean military dictatorship. The cantata is a musical document of remembrance and part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of General Pinochet's coup d'état.



Jennifer Kauter

has been a member of the Board of Trustees of the schwelle Foundation since 2008. The pastor is involved in the schwelle's Latin America working group.



In Kristina Bulling's living room, we discussed with Ahmed and Mousa Helou and Nahoum Oltchik from our Israeli-Palestinian partner organisation «Combatants for Peace» their non-violent path to peace in the region.



Kristina Bulling

accompanied the work of the schwelle Foundation from its establishment in 1979 until 2022. The church musician and mediator continues to be involved in the schwelle Southeast Europe working group.



Hannes Menke

has been a member of the schwelle Foundation's Board of Trustees since 2012. In addition to his involvement in the working group «Rethinking security», he is also active in the schwelle's Africa and Turkey working group.



Thomas Joppig

has been a member of the schwelle Foundation's Board of Trustees since 2015. The journalist and public relations officer supports the foundation in its press and public relations work.

ENCOURAGEMENT WE DIDN'T NEED

43 YEARS OF VOLUNTARY WORK AT SCHWELLE

She is a woman of the first hour: Kristina Bulling accompanied the establishment of schwelle 45 years ago and helped drive the foundation's development. Hannes Menke and Thomas Joppig spoke to her about the first activities, the spiritual roots of schwelle and about hope in difficult times.

Kristina, schwelle has been with you for 43 years.

What does it mean to you and your life?

schwelle was and is a kind of spiritual and intellectual home for me: this is reflected in the connection with people who share the same values and have the same vision of life, justice and society as I do.

How did you experience the beginnings of the schwelle and who was there?

The beginnings are still vivid in my mind. Our meetings took place in Fischerhude, in the house of Ruth-Christa and Dirk Heinrichs, the couple who founded the foundation. In the early days, there were three official board members: Ruth-Christa, Dirk and my husband Urban Bulling. I had the status of an advisory member. But if I remember correctly, all decisions were made by consensus anyway.

What motivated you to get involved in schwelle?

I didn't just want to make a difference within my family, but also outside my personal environment — together with others. There is this beautiful canon «Alone you are small, but together we will be advocates for the living». We used to love singing it, with the emphasis on together. From the very beginning, I was fascinated by the connection between spirituality and the search for practical ways to achieve non-violence in life.

And that led relatively quickly to concrete activities.

What were the first projects that you realised together?

Our first activity was a research project on school history books in Europe. We supported the creation of handouts for teachers. This involved the so-called «Change of Perspective» method: The events of the war were presented from the perspective of the victims, the defeated. These curricula were then actually incorporated into school lessons.

Another project took us to Poland in 1983. It was a dramatic time under Prime Minister Jaruzelski, whose aim was to abolish civil rights and destroy the entire democracy movement and the Solidarność trade union. Citizens were subjected to reprisals and arrests. There was great hardship. There was a lack of food and hygiene products. This was Dirk and Urban's hour. They made supply runs in a borrowed lorry. They approached Catholic and Protestant parishes.

What happened after these beginnings?

The scientific reappraisal of the Vietnam War soon began. The USA had sprayed the defoliant Agent Orange to track down the Vietcong. However, the effects of this dioxin were horrific. Although the Vietnam War was almost ten years ago, the further back it was, the more obvious the devastating consequences of the contamination became. We supported the establishment of a laboratory in a hospital in Hanoi, where methods for the early detection of malformations during pregnancy were improved.

We were able to realise two completely different projects in close proximity to us. The foundation was involved in the construction of an apprentice electrical workshop near Steinfeld. This was a therapeutic facility for young people with behavioural problems. Shortly afterwards, it supported the establishment of the Parzival-Hof. This beneficial facility, where physically and mentally impaired people have found a sheltered home, has now been in existence for 40 years.

In 1984, the foundation expanded its contacts with the peace movement in the USA. My husband Urban and Burkhard Luber, our managing director at the time, followed invitations from our numerous partners from the so-called peace churches, the Quakers, Mennonites and the Church of the Brethren.

So it was a broad spectrum of projects: Practical help for people, research, political activities. What particularly moved and encouraged you in the first five years?

We didn't need any encouragement. Dirk was an indescribable optimist. He was guided by two sayings that he liked to quote. One was a quote from his friend Gustav Heinemann: «Don't talk so much, do something.» It became a challenge and a guiding impulse for him. The other was a quote from Albert Schweitzer: «The little you can do is a lot.»

In terms of content, we were moved by the resistance against militarisation and armament. This was the big issue that drove us at the time, and we were primarily looking for alternatives based on the non-violence of Jesus. In this context, we organised events, symposia, lectures and seminars.

In order to help spread not only bad news, but also good news, we created the Transatlantic Peace Newsletter, which in short form forwarded good news from the networks of friendly partner organisations worldwide — at that time still by fax.

The field of peace research also played an important role right from the start. How did this come about?

After two world wars, many people felt a need to turn back, a need for peace. In 1968, Gustav Heinemann coined the term «peace in case of emergency», much to the dismay of the military. It was the time of the 1968ers, who demanded a reappraisal of history. In this situation, some historians felt called upon to contribute to the discussion. In 1984, in Fischerhude, in the house of the foundation couple Heinrichs, the Historical Peace Research Working Group was founded, of which Dirk was the only non-historian but historically competent layman to be a member. Due to his own experiences as a soldier, coming to terms with the war became an existential question for him, which was reflected in his publication «Dishonouring war — are soldiers potential murderers?».



Dirk and Ruth-Christa Heinrichs,
who founded the *schwelle* Foundation
in 1979 out of their deep desire to work
for peace.



In 1997, Claus and Urban Bulling organised the construction of new houses in Sanski Most for the Bosnians who had found refuge in Bremen.

During the Bosnian war, you were involved in helping refugees and received a lot of support. How did this manifest itself in concrete terms?

Because we had taken in a Bosnian family ourselves, I knew the head of the Workers' Samaritan Federation. As he knew that I was quite well connected in the Bremen Protestant Church, he asked me one day if I knew where 45 displaced Bosniaks could find accommodation in Bremen. I then contacted all 69 parishes and in a very short time — it was a matter of days — I received well over 50 confirmations. This willingness to help and provide accommodation was simply overwhelming. It was a matter of providing rooms and funding for living expenses and insurance for three months. After that, the city wanted to cover the costs. Several parishes made their parish halls available, the cathedral made its home in Seebergen available and private individuals were willing to take in refugees. But no sooner had I collected the signed declarations of commitment than a new regulation came into force stating that the funding had to be covered for the entire duration of the war. The next miracle happened: none of the signatories backed out.

Preparations for the repatriation began in 1997. A small delegation of Bosniaks and people from Bremen travelled back to Bosnia to find a suitable place to build houses, which the foundation was prepared to finance with the help of extra donations. A site was found very close to the refugees' home village, which is now in Republika Srpska, and the purchase contract was quickly negotiated with the town. Back in Bremen, an appeal for donations in the lokal newspaper «Weser-Kurier» brought in an incredibly large sum. An architect friend drew up the plans free of charge, building materials were available in Bosnia, and the labourers were our male refugees themselves, who were excellent craftsmen and had almost all built a house themselves before. The houses were completed within just three months, so that in the summer of 1997 a tearful farewell was celebrated with a big party.

Reinhard and Wiebke Jung became co-founders in the 1990s. How did this change the work of the foundation?

Reinhard was a pastor in the «Church service in the world of work» and brought new projects with him. He was particularly committed to the former employees of the Vulkan shipyard in Bremen. After its bankruptcy, the foundation set up a counselling centre for them. He also co-founded the association «Arbeit und Zukunft», of which he became chairman. We as *schwelle* co-financed the carpenter post at the Tenever Unemployment Centre.



Kristina Bulling with Dirk Heinrichs and Gordana Stojanović during a support trip to war-torn Croatia in the early 1990s.

Wiebke had joined the organisation «gewaltfrei handeln» and was on the board for many years. She had the idea of training all the educators of a nursery school in non-violent conflict resolution. The project was called «When ravens argue» and was intended to enable children to deal with conflicts in a non-violent way. The project was successfully implemented in a daycare centre in Bremen and received a lot of positive feedback, both from the parents and from the children's subsequent schools. The children made a positive impression there because they showed particularly good social behaviour, were willing to take responsibility and settled minor disputes independently. A marvellous success of the project.

Another important year in the history of *schwelle* is 2003, the year in which the International Bremen Peace Prize was awarded for the first time.

How did the idea come about?

Reinhard came up with the idea. It led to *schwelle* putting its previous philosophy of behaviour up for discussion. Dirk and Ruth-Christa's understanding was anchored in the Christian principle: «Everything you do, do in secret.» Wiebke and Reinhard, on the other hand, coined a completely different principle: «Do good and talk about it!» This step suddenly brought the foundation's work into the public eye. The Peace Award was also a good opportunity to familiarise ourselves with new projects and gain new project partners.

What encounters with Peace Award winners do you particularly remember?

All of our award winners were wonderful people who made a deep impression on me, so it's really difficult for me to prioritise. However, meeting Parents Circle, people from both sides who had lost children or other relatives in the Israeli-Palestinian clashes, is one of those particularly vivid memories. Instead of hating the other side, together they have committed themselves to a different path. Together they visit schools to tell young people about the pain they have suffered and the madness of the consequences of violence. The terrible thing is that the violence has never abated and is now escalating to an extent that none of us could have imagined.

With the theme «Rethinking security» and events of the same name, *schwelle* has also increased its public profile in Bremen.

With what aim?

At one of our annual conferences, I realised that although we support wonderful projects, our own ideas and principles on current socio-political issues are hardly or not at all visible to the public. I had learnt about the «Rethinking security» project through the organisation «gewaltfrei handeln». I was totally fascinated by this concept because it focussed on something very concrete. At last, I was given argumentation aids for discussions on this topic. Out of my enthusiasm, I committed myself to organising a seminar, which was actually very successful and had a large turnout. The «Rethinking security» working group was then set up at *schwelle* so that we can continue to work on the topic. The new concept, which includes both the war in Ukraine and the Middle East war, is now available.

What was the specific idea behind «Rethinking security»?

The authors assume that disarmament is possible without jeopardising security. Specific individual steps are used to illustrate what needs to be done within a certain period of time in order to transfer responsibilities from the military to the police and UN organisations.



Wiebke und Reinhard Jung

were members of the *schwelle* Foundation's Board of Directors from 1994 to 2022.

The theologians played a key role in shaping the further development of the foundation.



Kristina Bulling presents human rights activist Shreen Abdul Saroor from Sri Lanka with the Bremen Peace Prize certificate from the *schwelle* Foundation in 2011.

In 2019, the first *schwelle* event on «Rethinking security» took place in Bremen, in a packed event room and with very interested participants. The then peace commissioner of the Protestant Church, Pastor Renke Brahm, gave one of the opening speeches.



Peace policy is in a difficult position these days in view of the war in Ukraine, Israel and Palestine. What expectations do you have of the *schwelle* in this situation?

Basically, I wish *schwelle* the strength to persevere in times of crisis. Especially when our minds are filled with images of inhumane excesses of violence, we find it difficult to endure complexity. Because we find it difficult to bear our own powerlessness and helplessness, we may tend to take sides prematurely and show solidarity with the supposedly good side. This at least gives us the feeling that we have regained control of the situation. I don't want to be misunderstood: Violence must always be condemned, without ifs and buts. However, it rarely falls from the sky. It almost always has a history that must be recognised.

You continue to support *schwelle* even after leaving the Board of Directors. What do you wish *schwelle* for the future??

I wish for a lot. But almost everything I wish for already exists. So I can only make a few suggestions. I hope that our Board of Trustees becomes even more diverse and that even more younger people find their way to us. I also hope that our Board of Trustees members have a sense of spirituality. That they realise that there are forces outside ourselves and that we ultimately do not owe our lives to ourselves — so that we remain a little modest and humble in everything we do. I hope that people with a big and wide heart will always find a place in *schwelle*. A heart in which there is plenty of room for love. And that, carried by this inner richness, they can continue to change a lot, towards more humanity and justice.



In autumn 2022, Kristina Bulling retired after 43 years of voluntary work at the *schwelle* Foundation

PEACE WORK AND DIGITAL NETWORKING ORGANISATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

BY MIHAEL SEČEN

Nothing can replace personal conversations, touch and direct contact with people. But we live in a time in which more and more areas of life are shifting from the physical world to the digital world. There are dangers in this, but also great opportunities for peace organisations

Many things in the digital world can make our tasks easier. I am grateful that I have been able to learn by watching YouTube videos. Above all, I am grateful that I can stay in touch with people all over the world easily and in real time. So it's time to think about how we can utilise this space with the values we stand for. People take in a lot of information every day via social networks, YouTube, the internet and podcasts. Isn't it of great value that they hear the message that WE believe in and that WE carry?

schwelle organised an important event at Bremen City Hall on September 21. Many people were there, but the live broadcast meant that many more people were able to take part. Including me in Croatia. This meant that the message did not remain local, but had the potential to reach many people beyond Bremen. And the contribution is not limited by date, time and location, as the recording can be watched at any time.

Being present on the Internet and in social media is a lot of work! You have to deal with it. The more we publicise, the more visible we are and the message we share. And as far as YouTube or podcasts are concerned, regularity is important.

«But social media is bad, we don't want to be involved in something that's harmful!» It's true, there is a lot that is negative about social networks, but there are also many positive aspects. I think it's extremely important for our organisation INTeRo that we also make a contribution to the digital world with our messages and become visible and audible there. It is time to make this an integral part of our projects and build on our work..



Mihael Sečen

works in Rijeka / Croatia in *schwelle* partner organisation INTeRo.

Among other things, he is responsible for producing the podcasts «Neprocjeniva» (Inestimable) – for LGBT+ who value spirituality, their families, friends and allies.

www.neprocjeniva.com

schwelle is working to improve its digital presence. It provides regular updates on its activities and partner projects in a newsletter in English and German.

Order at: info@dieschwelle.de

Some events are streamed live or recorded and can be viewed afterwards on the website:

www.dieschwelle.de/en/videos

FOREST OF MEMORY INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT 2023

BY BEATE LÖWE-NAVARRO



Beate Löwe-Navarro

has been a member of schwelle

Board of Trustees since 2011.

The interpreter and specialist in international communication is active in schwelle's

Latin America working group and interprets at international meetings.



A Raulí southern beech tree was planted for Jacqueline Paulette Drouilly Yurich, who has been missing since 1974, as part of the Ecomemoria project.

September 2023 marked the 50th anniversary of General Augusto Pinochet's coup in Chile, which was the beginning of seventeen years of brutal military dictatorship. A friend from Santiago drew our attention to the Ecomemoria project, which is looking for funding for a «Forest of Memory» (Bosque de la Memoria) in memory of the victims of the dictatorship. *schwelle* supported the project with an individual grant.

Ecomemoria has set itself the task of planting a forest of indigenous trees in the south of Chile. Each tree commemorates a specific person who «disappeared» or was murdered under the military dictatorship. The people behind Ecomemoria are survivors of torture and political imprisonment, relatives of the disappeared and politically executed as well as first, second and third generation exiles.

The project combines two important aspects that are also in line with the goals of the *schwelle* Foundation: the commitment to preserving the environment and to human rights. The concept of Ecomemoria really appealed to me, as it preserves a living memory of the past while at the same time looking to the future, with the «Forest of Memory» helping to combat ongoing deforestation. The young trees give rise to new life, so that those who were murdered live on in «their» trees.

During the annual family visit to Chile, I had the opportunity to visit Ecomemoria. The «Forest of Memory» is located north-east of the regional capital Temuco. Ecomemoria has acquired around five hectares of land, which has now been planted with over 1,500 young trees. More than 3,000 are to be planted in total. Each tree is labelled with two weatherproof signs: One bears the name of the political prisoners, with the date of arrest or murder. A second plaque bears the name of the tree in Mapudungun (the Mapuche language), Spanish and Latin. Ecomemoria makes no distinction between the people to whom the trees are dedicated, so there may be a tree for a minister next to a tree for a farm labourer.

At the time of our visit, the plan was to dig a well, as regular watering of the trees is very important, especially in the first year after planting, which until then had been a labour-intensive process using canisters the project members brought from home. A few days later, we received a video from Ecomemoria showing gushing water as a result of the project. The next step is to build simple accommodation on the site so that overnight stays are possible if work or visits last several days.

In 2023, the schwelle Foundation was able to support ten projects with individual grants totalling 9,850 euros.

The projects range from an artistic workshop for young migrants from war zones to books on peace history and an international anti-fascist work camp. The « Forest of Memory» is an example of such individual support.

FINANCES 2023

SCHWELLE

FOUNDATION

In 2023, the foundation received 327,306 euros. This income comes from interest and dividend income from financial investments, donations and grants for projects. The foundation used the money to support twelve long-term peace projects in Turkey, Bosnia, Croatia, Tanzania, Togo, Israel, Palestine, Spain and Germany, provided money for individual support, facilitated events, project and partner visits and maintained an office with 1.5 posts. Expenditure totalled 302,320 euros. The result was used to create provisions for the Bremen Peace Award 2024.

In 2023, we received 17,394 euros special donations for the earthquake victims in Turkey, which we forwarded to our project partner SOHRAM-Casra. In 2022, we had increased «grants from third parties» with a project in Bosnia with the Schmitz Foundations and correspondingly higher project expenditure.

The foundation's assets, including free reserves, totalled 4.6 million euros.

Expenditure	2021 in T €	2022 in T €	2023 in T €	% 2023
Projects	236,2	278,5	239,5	79,2 %
Project Partners	142,7	161,6	139,5	46,1 %
Individual Grants	7,2	7,5	10,9	3,6 %
Bremen Peace Award	4,6	25,6	3,0	1,0 %
Personnel Costs Projects	81,7	83,8	86,0	28,5 %
Operating Costs	61,3	64,9	62,8	20,8 %
Material Costs	34,1	37,0	34,1	11,3 %
Personnel Costs Administration	27,2	27,9	28,7	9,5 %
Summe der Ausgaben	297,5	343,5	302,3	100%

Income	2021 in T €	2022 in T €	2023 in T €	% 2023
Income from Assets	100,1	108,6	103,0	31,5 %
Major Donations	270,0	140,0	125,0	38,2 %
General Donations	29,3	24,6	30,5	9,3 %
Project-Related Donations	33,7	29,2	63,5	19,4 %
Grants from Third Parties	6,5	32,3	5,3	1,6 %
Total Income	439,6	334,7	327,3	100%

FINACES 2023

FOUNDATION

SHALOM DIACONATE

THE DEPENDENT FOUNDATION SHALOM DIACONATE

In 2002, the *schwelle* founding families established the non-independent Foundation Shalom Diaconate. This foundation supports the work of the *schwelle* partner project «gewaltfrei handeln».

The foundation's assets amount to 615,030 euros. In addition, there are reserves of 23,132 euros as of 31 December 2023.

FINANCES OF THE SHALOM DIACONATE FOUNDATION 2023

Expenditure		2023
Donation to gewaltfrei handeln		12.000 €
Administrative Expenses		1.037 €
Losses from the Disposal of Securities		4.113 €
Total expenses		17.150 €

Income		2023
Income from assets		16.291 €
Income from the Disposal of Securities		6.554 €
Donations to the Shalom Diaconate Foundation		0 €
Total Income		22.845 €

Result	+ 5.695 €
---------------	------------------

BOARD OF TRUSTEES AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF SCHWELLE FOUNDATION 2023

In 2023, Aissatou Bouba joined the *schwelle* Board of Trustees, Rolf Klau-ner and Angelika Moriz were appointed as advisors. So, the foundation had 10 members of the Board of Trustees, 3 advisors and 4 members of the Executive Board as of December 31, 2023.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES:

Aissatou Bouba
Beate Löwe-Navarro
Britta Ratsch-Menke
Heinrich Theilmann
Jennifer Kauther
Johanna Zschornack
Markus Schmidt-Gröttrup
Rebekka Meyboden
Susanne Korhammer
Thomas Joppig

ADVISORS:

Angelika Moriz
Birgit Volmerg
Rolf Klauner

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

Anette Klasing (Chairwoman)
Hannes Menke (2. Chairman)
Bärbel Ludewig (Treasurer)
Eckart Behm

EMPLOYEES OF THE OFFICE:

Petra Titze (Management)
Saida Halep (Administration)



Back Cover:

Every two years the *schwelle* Foundation
awards the International Bremen Peace
Prize in Bremen's City Hall
– also on May 31, 2024.

schwelle Foundation
Contributions to Peace

Wachmannstraße 79
D-28209 Bremen
Telephone +49 (0)421 – 30 32 575
info@dieschwelle.de
www.dieschwelle.de

Donation Account:
GLS Bank
DE67 4306 0967 4028 9726 00
BIC: GENODEM1GLS

