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Envisioning peace

An analysis of grassroots views on the
Nagorny Karabakh conflict



European Union initiative

Peace
is within
our power

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International Alert works with people directly affected by conflict to build lasting peace. Together, we believe peace is within our power. We focus on solving the root causes of conflict, bringing together people from across divides. From the grassroots to policy level, we come together to build everyday peace.

Peace is just as much about communities living together, side by side, and resolving their differences without resorting to violence as it is about people signing a treaty or laying down their arms. That is why we believe that we all have a role to play in building a more peaceful future.

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1. Introduction

To this day, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict that erupted in the early 1990s remains one of the most dangerous and unpredictable conflicts in the entire post-Soviet space. Despite the widespread rhetoric about the conflict being 'frozen', both civilians and soldiers are regularly killed along the Line of Contact and the international border. Moreover, the bloody clashes of April 2016 showed that the sides remain ready to resort to military confrontation as a way of 'resolving' the conflict.

Expanding on the peacebuilding work carried out by various organisations and individuals around this conflict over the past 25 years,¹ International Alert has conducted a study to highlight possible alternatives to war, ways of transforming the conflict proposed by the societies themselves and potential new approaches to peacebuilding.

The results of this study confirm various widespread assumptions about the conflict. Interestingly, they also debunk a number of stereotypes about the ways in which the conflict is perceived by people living in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Nagorny Karabakh, and external analysts. The research shows that the three societies share many similar trends, as well as a number of significant differences in certain aspects.

We hope that the conclusions and recommendations put forward here prove useful to the sides in the conflict and also to external actors involved in mediating its peaceful resolution. We intend to disseminate them widely so that they may provide food for thought, analysis and creative proposals from the societies involved, enabling further work on the ground to prepare people to live together in peace.

¹ For background, see International Alert, *Advancing the prospects for peace: 20 years of civil peacebuilding in the context of the Nagorny Karabakh conflict*, London, 2013, https://www.international-alert.org/sites/default/files/Caucasus_NagornyKarabakh_CivilPeacebuilding20Years_EN_2013.pdf

2. Methodology

International Alert and a group of regional experts developed a qualitative research methodology based on in-depth semi-structured interviews with representatives from different social groups within the three societies. We took a retrospective approach to discussing the cost of conflict and peace. Respondents were asked about their views on the prospects for conflict transformation from the standpoint of their own personal experience. They reflected on how their life and the lives of those around them might have been different if the war had not occurred, and to consider what they as individuals could do for peace. This methodology can open up other perspectives and show what compromises need to be made to avoid a similar fate being passed on to the next generation. By gauging individual opinions, we explored the potential in society as a whole to work for peace.

We chose this methodology precisely because we wanted to hear the opinions of ordinary people whose voice is often ignored regarding the conflict. We sought to understand their hopes, fears and plans for the future through the prism of their past experience. An analysis of such truly personal stories gave us a good insight into the impact of the conflict on all three sides and also showed us areas for potential further work on conflict transformation. Moreover, this study allowed ordinary people to express their views on the conflict and, in so doing, to understand that their views are meaningful. Analysis was done by a team of experts, including in psychology, which allowed us to understand the complexities of the relationship between individuals and their environment.

Alert trained a group of young Armenian and Azerbaijani researchers in this methodology. The joint training also gave these young people a rare opportunity to meet someone from the 'other' side; for many of them, it was their first such experience. These young people, who were mainly new to peacebuilding, conducted 110 interviews in 41 locations,² both urban and rural, in the capitals and along the frontline, as well as in communities of internally displaced persons (IDPs). To ensure an inclusive selection of views and opinions, Alert was careful to maintain a balance regarding the gender, social position and age of the respondents, among other features.

The researchers faced many challenges during the data collection stage. The topic of study is a highly sensitive one from a political perspective, but also due to the researchers' own internal psychological barriers caused by the conflict and because they live in suspended animation between war and peace. The researchers added their own comments alongside each interview, which allowed the analysis to consider how their experiences and traumas may have affected the information gathered. Nevertheless, in all three societies, while there was ambivalence about certain issues, there was also a flexibility in attitudes and an ability to see positives in the negatives. A huge amount of information was gathered, including extremely emotional material and profound reflections on the impact of the conflict on ordinary people.

Finally, we feel it is important to highlight that we carried out these interviews in late 2017 and analysed the results in the first half of 2018. Therefore, while the political events in Armenia of April 2018 may not have affected the results, they have inevitably played a part in the formulation of the recommendations.

2 The locations have not been disclosed in order to protect the safety of our partners and beneficiaries.

3. The question of identity

“I haven’t even thought about what my life would be like without the conflict, because it exists ... It would be stupid to answer that question, because it would be purely theoretical.”

“I was born during the war and consider myself to be part of the ‘independence’ generation. I cannot imagine a life without conflict. My father fought in the war and I have felt the effect of war on myself since I was a child.”

“We must either die or get back our territories and find inner peace...”

Conflict as a fundamental part of identity

Over the many years of its existence, the Nagorny Karabakh conflict has affected people so deeply that it has become a part of their identity. People have ceased to view themselves and their lives separately from the conflict. In short, it has become a normal part of life. Isolating a part of one’s identity and taking a critical look at it is a complex and painful process. This may explain why most respondents claimed that the conflict does not affect them.

However, in reality this research shows that people plan their lives through the prism of the conflict, around the conflict and within the conflict. Interestingly, in the different societies, expectations around planning one’s personal life are different. Thus, in Armenia and Azerbaijan, people say they find it hard to plan a long-term future. This could be down to people living according to a system of learned helplessness, which is described by psychologists as a mental state where people’s negative past experiences have made them believe they have no control over the situation, and so they do not even try. In Nagorny Karabakh, on the other hand, people say they are confident they can map out their lives for many years ahead.

While this outlook may serve as a coping mechanism, it nonetheless poses huge risks as it may create a situation where people, precisely *because* they accept this state of affairs as normal, may subconsciously resist any attempt at conflict resolution.

The paradox of dehumanisation

This ‘normalisation’ of the conflict has led, on the one hand, to the dehumanisation of the people who are forced to live with it. Dehumanisation as a phenomenon goes back a long way in all three societies, showing up differently in each. When people are dehumanised, their individual stories disappear, to be replaced by the interests of the story of a bigger group. The process of dehumanisation occurs as the conflict becomes mythologised, appearing to be vast and unmanageable. Compared to the vastness of this conflict, the individual loses their worth. They become invisible as an actor; even their death is seen as a reasonable price to pay for the ‘important’ conflict. The value of each individual life is lost, as people’s attention is focused on the central theme of victory or defeat in the conflict.



Although dehumanising the ‘other’ is a common human coping mechanism in times of conflict, in this context it is also reflective of the Soviet style of thinking, whereby the state’s aims were paramount and the individual was simply a means to an end. Individual opinions were not seen as valuable, leading to a loss of self-worth or belief in the ability of the individual to influence change in society.

On the other hand, when respondents spoke about the potential for conflict resolution and about meeting people from the ‘other’ side, the study showed differences in opinion depending on whether they were answering from the personal or the group standpoint. The most interesting and imaginative answers were those given by respondents voicing their personal opinions. Thus, in their answers, the individual likes to perceive themselves as far more tolerant and open to compromise than the community, society or other grouping.

“We used to live with Armenians very well. So why not live together again? There were a lot of Armenian workers, who used to build our roofs and houses. They used to be our ‘kirve’ [a person who holds the baby boy during circumcision]. Our men used to marry Armenian women. Armenians are very kind people. Ordinary people in Armenia are not at fault.”

4. Division of roles and responsibilities

“Peace is a life free of war and conflict – doesn’t matter if it’s between two states or within a family.”

In this region, there tends to be consensus around the division of social roles and responsibilities. In this framework, society has effectively delegated ‘responsibility’ for the conflict and its resolution to particular groups of people.

The gender and generational divide

Although respondents said that everyone suffers from the conflict – especially children, women, soldiers, the poor and those who live in the border regions – responsibility for dealing with the conflict is believed to rest mainly with the older male generation (although in Nagorny Karabakh specifically, it is perceived as everyone’s responsibility). This type of delegation may demonstrate a desire to renounce responsibility for a problem that is seemingly intractable. However, it also reflects a desire to maintain a sense of control – inasmuch as society is seen as functioning ‘normally’ – and thus is an active coping mechanism.

Looking at gender as complex relationships between various aspects of people’s identities, including age, social class, sexuality, marital status, ethnic or religious background, requires an intersectional approach with specialised methodology, and thus goes beyond the scope of this study. However, it appears that the protracted nature of the conflict perpetuates the construction and persistence of rigid patriarchal gender roles, where women, for example, are assigned the ‘natural’ functions of caring, mothering and supporting male members of society, including on conflict matters. Partly for this reason, engaging women in the survey (particularly young women in Azerbaijan) presented a particular challenge.

The older generation cannot or will not delegate responsibility for the conflict to the young. This may be due to older people’s longstanding attachment to the conflict, a desire to protect young people from it, or a lack of faith in young people’s ability to resolve the problem. Again, Nagorny Karabakh is an outlier in this regard: respondents there highlighted that as young people experienced military action in April 2016, they have taken ownership of the conflict and so the age factor is less relevant.

Moreover, there is a now a generation of young people who have grown up with no personal experience of interacting or living with the ‘other’ side. This creates fertile ground for misperceptions, stereotypes and manipulation of emotions. While young people see themselves detached from the conflict (although again not in Nagorny Karabakh) and as more progressive, this does not make them more peace-loving. On the contrary, if another war broke out, many young people say they would be prepared to fight.

“If you ask villagers who live on the border, they are categorically against war, but if you ask young people in [the capital] or in other cities, they want war and they don’t care about the people living in villages – they just want to fight...”

The centre-periphery divide

Differences of opinion and perceptions regarding the conflict can be seen not only between the individual and the group and the young and the old, but within different groups in the societies themselves, along with a similar distribution of roles



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and responsibilities. Those who live in the capital cities tend to have quite clear views on how people in border areas should live and what qualities they should possess. They have clear ideas about how patriotic these civilians living near the frontline should be in order to go calmly about their daily lives as the bullets whistle over their heads. This situation also involves a delegation of responsibility, although people here retain their connection to the conflict by attempting to satisfy their sense of patriotic duty and desire to feel useful in some way.

Armenia and Azerbaijan are quite similar once again in this regard: the further people live from the frontline, the more strongly they speak about patriotism. The same differences in perception of the conflict are evident between respondents from Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, on the one hand, and Baku and the frontline regions on the other hand. Within Nagorny Karabakh, it seems there is no space for such differences.

“I will continue my daily life as I do now until peace is achieved. People living on the Line of Contact or the border should be careful first of all. And then, they should live their life as they do every day ... and say ‘we are not afraid of anything. We will live here until the end’.”

“People in disputed and border areas must unfortunately get used to being shot at. In fact, I think they’re already used to it.”

“There are IDPs and refugees who have taken up important positions in our society. Before [they] ... never played an important role in Baku society, but now they ... play a more important role than local people ... Without them society would be different.”

“I see very few people who would want to go to Karabakh. Even among old people. They’ve got used to it. If they go back, then, yes, they will suffer. Because life in Baku and in Agdam are not the same as each other.”

“We want to get rid of the label of ‘refugee’, which locals call us always.”

“Everybody is waiting for the order of our supreme commander. If he orders it, everyone will go to war. They have to live their lives as well as they can. Of course, they are in danger. They cannot live a peaceful life. The only thing is that the government should support them. And we should support our government as well.”

“Of course, it’s the ordinary person and people who suffer. I do not think anyone can influence the oligarchs in this country. They just do not care.”

The host community-displaced divide

In all three societies, there is a tendency to exclude those who have suffered the most from the war – refugees and IDPs – from the conflict discourse. For different reasons, both the authorities and society marginalise these groups and try to prevent them from becoming an independent actor. They want these groups to act as a conduit for government policy aims on the conflict and domestic issues.

For much of the population, refugees and IDPs serve as scapegoats who are blamed for all of society’s problems. They are also convenient because one can compare oneself to them favourably. Moreover, they are often confused with economic migrants, a common issue in many societies and one that adds to experiences of dehumanisation.

The reaction of IDPs and refugees to this exclusion varies and does not necessarily follow the ‘official’ line. The traumatic experience of war, years of living in an unfamiliar environment, and the loss of their normal social roles and support have led some people to eventually conform to the roles assigned to them.

Role of the authorities and third parties

As the conflict appears too vast and impossible to resolve by peaceful means, people have learnt and become resigned to their own helplessness in this situation. As a result, they delegate responsibility for it to third parties. Most respondents told us that conflict resolution should be dealt with by the authorities and third parties such as the OSCE Minsk Group, the United States (US) and Russia.

Paradoxically, however, people do not in fact trust these actors. Responses showed low levels of trust, particularly in the role played by Russia, which is seen as the main external player given its ambiguous position as mediator and arms provider to all sides. Moreover, respondents from all three societies displayed low levels of trust in their own authorities when talking indirectly of a need for social justice regarding corruption. This common theme emerged when they examined who might be benefiting from the war or from maintaining a situation of ‘no peace, no war’.

5. Discourse of conflict, peace and compromise

Myths and propaganda

The concept of 'strength' in the conflict discourse has become mythologised and turned into a tool by respondents from all three sides. Looking at their answers, strength is generally seen as a combination of power and money, capable of creating and manipulating conflict, and of resolving it. Those who possess such strength are the authorities, third parties, business people, the diaspora, international non-governmental organisations (INGOs), and other actors with money and influence.

Even definitions of the volume of the conflict and peace have become mythologised. Most respondents see the conflict as huge, boundless and, consequently, complex and impossible to resolve by peaceful means. According to their logic, only the force of war is capable of dealing with an issue of such magnitude. People are simply not aware of the power of peace.

The conflict has also been mythologised in such a way that it is seen as all-important and even valuable. This can be attributed to the emotional baggage of realising the price that has been paid for the conflict, and that is being paid to this day. This includes the official rhetoric that portrays the conflict as all but unsolvable, as well as the views expressed by many respondents about the money that is being made by both internal and external actors due to the conflict. The desire to feel part of this valuable and important thing, this resource, has over the many years of 'no peace, no war' developed in the sides a certain spirit of bargaining over and around the conflict.

Azerbaijani respondents in particular were critical of state propaganda. They saw the intense media efforts to create and maintain the enemy image as a factor that could provoke conflict at any moment and actively impede conflict transformation. Many voiced concern over how such propaganda and hate speech towards the other side might manifest itself in future generations at the individual and societal level.

This suggests that the search for, and development of, identity in Azerbaijani society is taking place in part through propaganda. It means that there is a significant danger that social potential and individual opinions on seeking peaceful ways of resolving the conflict could become yet more unpopular in the country as time passes.

"The Karabakh conflict is especially challenging because, for example, when I read the feed on social networks, you understand that chaos is starting and you can't do anything about it. Nothing – it's scary."

"The new generation thinks differently, everything has become more sacred. If you stop the bus at the park and start chanting 'Karabakh is ours', the people will come running and will join in the shouting. And then if you open the bus door and say 'let's go and take Karabakh', everyone will suddenly remember that they have to collect their kids from kindergarten and so on."

"There is no war here, but there is an information war. This war has an effect [on us]."



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“I believe that I can bring about some change even through sharing my knowledge and peaceful ideology with the younger generation [...] to take out hate speech and negative impact, which at some point could lead to the resolution of the conflict.”

Armenian respondents did not openly discuss the issue of propaganda as a problem. However, in both Armenia and Nagorny Karabakh, in response to our indirect questions, respondents voiced strongly nationalist ideas that clearly linked their stance on the conflict to their national identity. Although they mentioned enemy image propaganda far less, this does not necessarily mean that their stance is more flexible or that they are more open to seeking compromise. One can assume that these respondents see the preservation of the status quo as ‘stable justice’ and further confirmation of their Armenian national identity.

“If there had been no war, I think that I would not have this fighting spirit, which has helped me in life and continues to do so. Ever since I was a child, I have been used to war. I have never been afraid of war; I always knew that we would be victorious.”

Pseudo-satisfaction of needs

During the many years of ‘no peace, no war’, the conflict has come to be used as an instrument by the authorities and societies, and by individuals. In all three societies, respondents expressed opinions that war could satisfy such basic needs as security, identity, freedom and so on. Nevertheless, armed conflict is a pseudo-satisfier of these needs, as it in fact destroys all basic human needs without exception.

The terminology of peace and compromise

Regarding the conflict, all three communities seem prepared to pay a huge price – just ‘let there be no war’ (although in Azerbaijan this sentiment is less apparent). This situation effectively preserves a negative peace, while the authorities use the time to prepare for war – although the official rhetoric describes this as the price to pay for extending the peace. The societies feel that war is inevitable. The authorities exploit this fear to distract people from economic hardship, military spending and the failure to implement democratic social processes.

Within all three societies, differences exist in the understanding of fundamental terms such as ‘peace’ and ‘compromise’. People do not understand what these words may mean to others, although they might frequently declare their readiness to pursue this or that concept (as they themselves understand it). Occasionally, people accuse each other of not being willing to pursue peace or compromise in the sense in which *they* understand these things. This evidently has major implications for peacebuilding.

For example, many Armenian respondents felt that they were already living in peace, which they understood as their own victory. Thus, for them, there was no longer any need for discussion on conflict resolution. However, Azerbaijani respondents see the current state of affairs as a defeat. For them, this defeat generates feelings of tremendous emotional trauma.

Furthermore, while most respondents spoke of a need for peace, respondents from Nagorny Karabakh and Armenia understood this to mean stability. However, for Azerbaijani respondents, peace also implies justice. Responses from Nagorny Karabakh and Armenia show that people there have already found the justice that they were seeking since the events of 1915. For Azerbaijani respondents, however, stability will only be possible when there is justice – and justice means the return of territory.

“As soon as we have price rises, then there is immediately an escalation of the conflict on the border to distract our attention. And then you think: I’d rather live on bread alone than see a war break out again.”

“When you go into town and see nice houses and well-dressed people, and compare this with your own life, then you want to have what they have. It’s really hard. Sometimes my head aches when I think about these kinds of things.”

“We stand behind the army, and we should live a full life and always remember that if the army were not there, then it would be a disaster.”

“We want peace. A just peace. We do not need an unjust peace.”

6. Recommendations

These recommendations aim to guide peace negotiators, policymakers, donors, and national and international civil society activists who work to promote mutual understanding and peace between the societies divided by the Nagorny Karabakh conflict.

Work on identity

- Critically analysing one's own identity is a complex and painful process. However, such introspection can give individuals and societies the opportunity to take a clearer look at themselves and their conflict, and to better understand themselves and their place in it. This can be done by **encouraging the development of critical thinking – in particular, by examining how the concept of identity is manipulated** both at the level of the individual and of society.
- If changes are to occur in the identity of an individual or of society as a whole, then what is removed needs to be replaced with something else. **Creating an alternative historical discourse** to highlight shared and multiple identities, and to portray 'peace heroes' (as opposed to battle heroes) as positive role models, should provide a powerful alternative to ethno-centric attitudes.
- To address 'learned helplessness', people need to re-claim their agency in making decisions that affect their everyday life. **Opportunities for engaging in civic activism** on different levels should be promoted, while taking into account the specific local context and risk factors. There needs to be an understanding that participation in civil society means something wider than working for an NGO. At the same time, individual opinion and agency should be seen as something of value. If these changes take place, people will feel better able to voice and then act on their own views instead of those dictated by their country or group. Thus, this approach may help to transform the opinions and actions of various groups and of the sides themselves.

Work with selected target audiences

- Those most prepared to actively seek ways to resolve the conflict peacefully were people most affected by the conflict – those living near the ceasefire line, those who had fought and witnessed death and destruction at first hand (doctors, ex-combatants), and young men of conscription age. Many of them expressed a readiness to meet people from the 'other side' and offered to act as mediators. **Therefore, we should use the peacebuilding potential already present in society** by working with those who have first-hand experience of war and of living with people from the 'other' side. These people can destroy the stereotypes around the conflict present in their societies and take practical steps to promote peacebuilding initiatives.
- **It is important to take account of the different gender and generational roles within the three societies**, also recognising how the conflict 'belongs' to certain groups within them. Different formats are needed to work with the young people of Azerbaijan, detached as they are from the reality of the conflict, and with those of Nagorny Karabakh, who already have experience of military action. A 'one size fits all' approach to youth projects may not work here. There is a distinct need for dialogue between different generations *within* the societies, bringing together those who have been through war and those who have not. Having built up this format, it can then be turned into dialogue between different groups or sides in the conflict.



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- **It is important to focus on dismantling stereotypes and on developing opportunities for civic involvement and action by working in parallel with host communities and the refugees and IDPs.** Refugees and IDPs have been encouraged to wait to return home so they could start living happy lives. It is time to focus on discussing with them what their needs and aspirations are, and how they can develop a sense of agency. Host communities should be made aware of stereotypes surrounding refugees and IDPs, and of the potential risks of the conflict resuming should the official plans for their return home be put in place. It is important to work with the fears present in societies around the return of refugees and IDPs by painting an accurate picture of these people's desires.

Work on discourse

- In dealing with the issue of dehumanisation, it is important to put the focus back on the individual who has shouldered the heavy burden of war, their feelings, thoughts, fears and hopes. Personal history must be clearly seen and valued. Only then will it become possible to appreciate a person's worth and activity. **Open media projects are key in giving a platform to personal stories and evoking empathy.** Work on rehumanising one's fellow citizens can provide the format for peacebuilding initiatives within societies. Examples include promoting a realistic understanding of life in the border areas and of the situation of those who suffer from the war every day. This should involve making people aware of what it is like in reality to live in constant fear of death from a stray bullet.
- **Work is needed on encouraging people to become more aware of the personal cost of conflict (in economic terms) by building pragmatic arguments.** If people realise that every individual and every family is paying for the conflict and not for peace, this could help to alter the dynamics of the conflict.
- By expressing concern over the harm caused by spreading the enemy image, respondents could already be said to be engaging with the practical process of seeking ways out of the current situation. If people recognise the serious potential danger to society and to youth from the propaganda of hatred and the enemy image, and the effects that it can have on national identity, this will have a positive effect. Furthermore, evidence³

3 H. Mueller, The economic cost of conflict, IGC working paper, 2013, pp.8–12, <http://www.iae.csic.es/investigatorsMaterial/a152611094820archivoPdf72447.pdf>; M.M. bin Mohammad Aslam, Threat of Daesh in universities: Malaysia's experience, Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses, 9(4), 2017, pp.13–17

shows that **developing critical thinking skills could help people become more immune to propaganda.** Work on separating the stance of the Azerbaijani authorities from that of society is also needed. Drawing a clear line between the two would help to support those who oppose propaganda and stand for peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Work on different types of dialogue

Across the conflict divide

- All the sides perceived 'strength' as possessing an almost magical potential to affect the conflict. In this situation, it is worth dividing this concept into smaller, more specific elements. Seeing the conflict as immense, it is hard to imagine realistic solutions. One starting point could be identifying what is important for people in their everyday lives and beginning with the 'little' things that can bring positive results. Examples include improving the everyday human security of those who live near the border and providing the right to free movement. **Before big political decisions are taken, humanitarian decisions and actions are needed.** This would help to create a situation in which societies can accept peace as something of value, and as a tool. The process of working on everyday peace aimed at meeting basic human needs can gradually overcome a willingness to resort to war to resolve the conflict. An analysis of the conflict could show how each person could take a part of this strength and use it.
- The talent for trading and bargaining was cited by respondents as one of the traits shared by Armenians and Azerbaijanis. Although there is potential for dialogue here, the way in which this resource is currently used is likely to slow the search for compromise. **Discussions about potential opportunities for trade and profit for everyone should be encouraged.** Envisioning a distant political peace in societies – even if abstract and, as yet, unrealistic – will help to create alternatives to the military rhetoric.
- Respondents in all three societies spoke quite unexpectedly of the need for social justice. This instinctive understanding that the conflict promotes injustice on a number of different levels could be used to prompt reflection on the possibilities for a fair and just peace. **Debates around this desire for social justice, and its links with the conflict, should be held between all sides.** This will help to encourage identification and discussion of shared challenges.

Internal dialogue within societies

- **It is imperative that people understand each other's perception of terms like 'peace' and 'compromise'.** This could lead to dialogue between different groups within the divided societies and help to reduce the danger of these terms being used to manipulate people. The overwhelming majority of respondents voiced the need for peace. This desire can be used to promote debate of what needs to happen for individuals and societies to feel that peace has been achieved – and of what would be needed to sustain this peace in the long term. Such debate would help to promote understanding of the difference between negative and positive peace and of what people actually want.
- **There needs to be a deeper understanding on all sides of the notion of compromise based on mutual concessions as a necessary foundation for peace.** Each side accepts compromise, but only from the opposite party. There is little reflection on what concessions the societies and individuals are prepared to make *themselves*. The existing potential for compromise, current red lines and grey areas should be carefully explored through research and analysis. The process should involve stakeholders at different levels, from grassroots to decision-makers. Such a process would require different methods of engagement and even a re-framing of the topic by using euphemisms for the word 'compromise'.

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