

**2017**

# **ANUAL REPORT**



# **THE HAGUE PEACE PROJECTS**

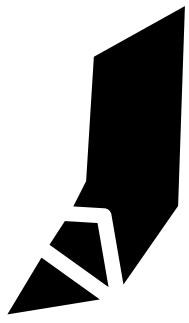


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# INTRODUCTION

The third year report of The Hague Peace Projects (HPP) looks proudly into the achievements the organization reached throughout 2017. It was certainly a fruitful year for HPP, especially in terms of its human resource growth, its expansion of interests, its enhancement of networking, and its further development of well-initiated projects from the previous years.

HPP was founded in 2014 by four individuals who all work in the fields of human rights and conflict resolution. Together they agreed on the current necessity to provide people in Europe and conflict regions with genuine and reliable information about on-going political and social disputes, both local and abroad. HPP believes that thorough research, analysis and regular personal contact with the diaspora communities within Europe, particularly the Netherlands, enables for a possibility to comprehend the true causes and consequences of human rights conflicts. In this way, HPP can more effectively communicate this knowledge to inform our network and its contacts, especially those in high-level decision-making roles.

The values behind HPP's work begin with the organization's belief that conflict can only really be solved through spaces of dialogue, as opposed to violence. Therefore, HPP believes it is necessary to bring different actors together, including victims, to share dialogues at the same table. In 2017, HPP invested a great deal of resources into the organization of cultural and artistic events in order to raise awareness on today's conflicts among a wider public, and to enhance this public's capacities to contribute to peace.

HPP divides its workload into seven working groups (WG) which are very distinct from each other in terms of size, nature, objectives, and longevity. On this moment we have groups working on: The Great Lakes Region, Turkey, Bangladesh, Syria, Somalia, Morocco, and Sudan. The reason for HPP to ultimately focus on these geographical areas underscores the organization's intention to work with people in the Netherlands who want to raise awareness in the Netherlands on the troublesome and largely overlooked situations and environments outside of Europe, and to signal towards the impact that these environments can have throughout. In the next section, we will take a deeper look into the general work and achievements of each working group over 2017, which ultimately defines HPP's 2017 General Program of Work.





To summarize, in 2017, HPP reached multiple objectives: the organization helped to facilitate dialogue between different diasporic communities in the Netherlands whom hold contrasting views on delicate topics, thus, connecting people with diverse background and beliefs using the tools of dialogue and peace-building. Participating in this process helped HPP to develop confidence in the powers of dialogue for peace-building and freedom expression, to delve deeper into complicated topics. These topics, moreover, help to reveal the occasional superficiality of our opinions on complex subject matters. We hope that by continuing in this active process, the best fruits of our efforts are yet to come.



## PROGRAMS



### THE GREAT LAKES REGION

The Great Lakes Region in Africa, distinguished from the homonymous American Great Lakes Region, includes six African states: Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Rwanda, and Uganda. Although the region's tragic events are not often covered by Western media, the area is well-known by experts as a crucible of conflict that has launched multiple uprisings and invasions. Thus, due to short coverage on media and the unfortunate economic, political, and social situation of the area, HPP, since its creation, has felt compelled to establish a Working Group capable of professionally dealing with some of the problems in this area of the world, with a positive and constructive approach.

The 2017 Program of Work of the Great Lakes Region WG, is following the path well-designed by its previous years' efforts, and this year has been particularly intense. The WG has been feeding the Dutch interest into exploring further the inner issues of this region, along with their root causes. More specifically, through organized events, the African diaspora

effectively promoted peace and democratic processes to raise the general awareness about regional instability, whilst fostering the integration of African populations within European and more specifically, Dutch contexts.

Foremost, it is worth mentioning the **International Uganda Convention**, an event held from the 23rd to the 26th of February in The Hague. The event's main foci included: firstly, investigating Uganda's strategic role in stabilizing the Great Lakes Region; secondly, discussing human rights situations within the country and the role and pitfalls of good governance; and finally, looking into the role and unity of pro-democracy activists. The conference was a success in terms of its participation and its forming of many connections with important partners committed to the cause of the Great Lakes Region.

The WG also held its monthly thematic evenings, where various experts were invited to speak on the different dynamics around peace-building. The subjects touched upon were diverse, including: peace, elections, gender, minorities, responsible information sharing, human rights issues, civic space, and democratic governance. The thematic event in September, titled **African Diaspora, Youth and Education in the Netherlands**, aimed to form a collective discussion around the challenges for Dutch youth of African descent in finding their place in the Netherlands.

Additionally, the WG was responsible for the "Unmask the Dictators from the Great Lakes Region" creative experiment during the Night of the Dictatorship organized by Prodemos. On this occasion, some speakers from the Great Lakes Region shared their personal life experiences growing up in a country under dictatorship. The experiment was emotionally moving and sensitized the public on how normal life can be enormously affected by living within a despotic power system. It forced everyone to engage with role-playing for a moment, so to imagine what it might be like to struggle with living in a restrictive society.

Eventually, in October, HPP held the priority event of 2017 for the Great Lakes Region WG: the third annual **Great Lakes Region Conference**. In 2017, the focus of the two-day Conference was centered on women's empowerment through peace-building processes. This Conference, like the first two editions, was very well-received by the public audience. The 2017 conference edition aimed to strengthen trust between men and women from the region and in particular, amongst the women themselves. The event attracted bloggers, media workers, researchers, artists, peace-workers, students, and many professional women. The interesting topics were conducive to forming a valuable and insightful dialogue, which established consensus among the participants in the conference to conceptualize how more active roles for women can be involved with and in peace-building processes.





# TURKISH-KURDISH DIALOGUE INITIATIVE



The current situation in Turkey is tense. Key events that compromised stability and reduced peace in Turkey over the recent years include the Syrian conflict and refugee crisis, the re-escalated conflict between the Turkish government and the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK), and an attempted state coup in July 2016. In 2017, Turkey's government declared an extension to the ongoing state of emergency. Civil society has, indeed, been the favorite target of the government's restrictive policies, with associations being shut-down and foreign staff expelled. It was for this reason that HPP already in 2015 decided to form the Turkish diaspora WG, whose main goal has been to de-escalate internal tensions between different parties, and to increase mutual understanding, especially between Turks and Kurds themselves

The diaspora WG was particularly active in 2017. Indeed, 2017 had been a productive year, as they had been in charge of a great deal of projects that fostered dialogue between Turks and Kurds living in the Netherlands, openly contrasting with human rights violations still occurring within Turkish borders.

The **discussion about freedom of expression** in Turkey, organized by the WG during **The Hague Freedom Book Fair**, attempted to reach HPP's aforementioned objectives in order to foster dialogue between Turkish and Kurdish diaspora. The discussion was intense and the audience, along with the panelists, suggested how possible solutions could come from ending some of the country's inner problems. The discussion group at the event agreed that the main problem in Turkey centers around those in the political arena who are always fighting for a singular identity— whether Islamist, Kurdish Islamist, or Turkish Islamist.

In order to delve deeper into the political complexities of Turkey and Turkish identities, the diaspora WG was also responsible for many smaller events, held in The Hague, Rotterdam, Amsterdam and Utrecht. One of them was on the referendum held in Turkey. The core topic of the debate was centered on the discomfort many Turkish-Dutch felt during the referendum. On the one hand, many have been encouraged by the Turkish government to

vote “yes,” and on the other hand, many have been encouraged by the Netherlands to vote “no”. This situation emphasizes an underlying tension between ‘White Netherlands’ and ‘Turkish Netherlands’—a tension which is often reflected within the Turkish community in Den Haag.

Another successful event was the **“Muslim Represent”** meeting which took place in Utrecht, the day after the Turkish voting period. This occasion was utilized as a platform for a critical analysis of the Muslim community in the Netherlands, from different representatives within the communities itself. The debate was constructive, and in spite of the differences among the participants, there was no heated confrontation during the discussion.

Certainly, the major success of the WG in 2017 was its contribution to the **Caux Forum of Initiatives of Change (IOC)**, an international event in which peace-makers, human rights activists, civil servants, academics, journalists, and students from all over the world gather to discuss peaceful solutions for violent conflicts, economic inequality, and human security. HPP agreed to cooperate with the municipality of Rotterdam for this project. During the dialogue, the WG emphasized their acknowledgment of the Armenian genocide, the Kurdish question, and the democratization of Turkey. These struggles in home countries were key issues to discuss. A good takeaway from this event was this quote from one of the panelists, named *Bond*: ‘We did what the government refused to do. We said *Sorry*.’ This presentation was the last statement of the Armenian-Kurdish-Turkish dialogue of Caux 2017, highlighting how we can all make a difference by making space for peaceful dialogue.







Freedom of expression,  
dialogue and conflict  
resolution in Bangladesh

## BANGLADESH

In the last three years, Bangladesh has undergone a surge of violence, spanning from attacks that target secular journalists and bloggers, academic elite, LGTBQI groups, tourists, and religious minorities. Bangladesh is a secular Muslim country, however, citizens who openly question religion are recurrently targeted by Islamic extremists. For bloggers, intellectuals, and writers who have openly critiqued religious conservatism through their writings, the consequences were severe. For this reason, in 2015, The Hague Peace Projects started to bring together members of the Bangladeshi diaspora living in Europe, to research and openly discuss a wide range of topics that include not only human rights violations of civil society and freedom of speech in Bangladesh. The WG also places particular interest on the effects of global warming, and the unequal burden of climate change that is currently taking place in Bangladesh.

On the 7th of January, HPP members participated in the protest, in front of the Peace Palace in The Hague, against the construction of a power plant close to a protected mangrove forest in Bangladesh. The idea behind the peaceful demonstration was to push this injustice under the attention of the International Court of Justice.

The most important event organized by the Bangladesh WG was **The Hague Freedom Book Fair**, an evolution of the 2016 Bangladesh Solidarity Book fair, from February 24th to 27th 2017, at Het Nutshuis in The Hague. The second edition of this alternative book fair – given the success of the first one – broadened-up the topics that were previously covered. With the participation of 15 publishing houses and book shops from around the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Turkey, and Somalia, the book fair attracted hundreds of people. The book fair showcased censored books from Bangladesh and Turkey, books on censorship in different countries written by persecuted and censored writers themselves, and other regular books. The book fair successfully brought together a diverse group of individuals, publishers and organizations to address the recent global crisis of freedom of expression. The event can be considered as laying down the foundation of a crucial network that can uphold and promote a dialogical method in solving the current global crisis of freedom of expression.

The ultimate goal is to organize an international book fair with more publishers of different languages, bringing their books to the event. Indeed, it is fundamental to continue the discussions we started this year. In the future, HPP will also include more countries in the discussion.



# SYRIA



Syria is probably the international disgrace of this new millennium. Due to a civil war with no end in sight, the now fragile country is on track to becoming the source of the world's largest refugee population. After many years of war and suppression in Syria, HPP decided to develop a project aimed to stimulate a process of mutual integration and understanding between Dutch locals and disenfranchised Syrian refugees.

Although the developments of the war in Syria are uncertain, it is crucial for Syrians, as well as the international community, to envision a future which strives for security, justice, and peace. Therefore, on the occasion of the **Oriental Landscapes** and **Global Week for Syria** (June 16-23), including the **International Refugee Day** (June 20), HPP and the Music and Beyond Foundation organized a two-day conference on the **Future of Syria**, on June 19th and 20th, 2017. High level speakers were brought together from Syria and the Netherlands to explore the possible outlines of the future of Syria, and to promote better understanding and cooperation in the integration process. This event gathered together policy makers and integration specialists from different organizations and municipalities, including permit holders, in order to discuss the obstacles and solutions towards a successful integration in The Netherlands.

In fact, the Syrian diaspora WG started the discussion on the topic of integration on the 16th of March, 2017. On that date, HPP was filled with participants from the panel discussion **"An Integration introduction into the Dutch labour market"**. The goal of the debates centered on the labour market (in general) and on the obstacles a refugee might have upon entering the market (in particular). Another topic of discussion focused on refugees who studied in other countries and according to European 'standards,' needed to repeat their education, which becomes a clear demotivation to integration. In response to these topics, the panel clarified that integration in the labour market is always a difficult—it is a long process that often starts with voluntary jobs or unpaid internship—but everyone points out: "Do not lose your mission!" Probably this was one of the most important messages of the event.

One of the most urgent matters for Syrians in the Netherlands, is to integrate into Dutch society. The Syrian WG noticed and experienced that integration was sometimes complicated by a sentiment of prejudice, disinterest and ignorance. To tackle this problem the WG started the **Integration Caravan**. With a caravan they visited many marketplaces in different cities and villages around the Netherlands, to talk to their new neighbors.



The Moroccan community is one of the largest migrant communities in the Netherlands and has produced many successful Moroccan-Dutch people. However, its current representation is at odds with the successes and capacities of that community. The negative images of the Moroccan community in the media and within politics are increasingly contributing to a one-sided and incomplete picture of the community. The Moroccan community is seen as a social problem as a result of this negative reporting. There must be a way to turn this negative representation around, find many Moroccan-Dutch people. That is why HPP established the project **Moroccans United**, in April 2017.

At the moment, the project consists of a select group of Moroccan-Dutch professionals who want to discuss important issues that concern the Moroccan community, through dialogue, workshops, and training. The goal of this project is to work from its own strength on political and social awareness, self-emancipation, decolonization, and thus to create a positive enhancement of Moroccan identity.



# SOMALIA



Somalia is trying to rebuild after several years of conflict and the complete disintegration of the country. Even today, violence is a daily reality. The Hague Peace Projects is building a platform for the Somalian diaspora to discuss its contributions to peace and reconstruction: a platform for the exchange of ideas, dialogue within the diaspora, and the development of new initiatives and projects for sustainable peace in Somalia. By getting together and discussing matters of importance to the entire community, the intention is to promote internal cohesion within the diaspora.

An important event organized by the WG is the **“Peace and War through Spoken Word”** during The Hague Freedom Book fair on the 24th of February, 2017. Around 140 people attended this Somali Poetry Night. The atmosphere was very open, lively, and warm. This evening was not only about the various forms and uses of poetry, including different forms of poetics, such as Gabay, Geraar, Buraanbur, and Heeso, it was especially about the bringing together of a community—indeed, the majority of attendees were young people with a Somali background.





## SUDAN

The program on Sudan is the most recent addition to HPP's working areas. The Sudan Working Group (WG) is the result of the collaboration between **Stichting Phanaar** and **The Hague Peace Projects**, with the common objective to promote the voices of the Sudanese diaspora and to engage in the dialogue for peace and justice in Sudan. The Sudanese diaspora come from very difficult situations, often divided by deep-rooted conflicts and clan divisions, and traumatized by numerous wars. These conflicts and divisions also manifest in the diaspora, and it is our aim to overcome this and unite.

The mission of the WG is, in fact, to enable the Sudanese community in the Netherlands to actively engage in finding solutions for peace and justice in Sudan by raising awareness about the situation in the country and sharing experiences, knowledge, and concerns that transcend into concrete agendas and actions.

The objective of the team is to create spaces of dialogue that encompass the Sudanese diversity and the different perspectives of the conflict. By doing so, the Sudan working group aims to tackle issues of justice, victims' healing, gender empowerment, freedom of expression, social enterprises, family disintegration, and other subjects in relation to Sudan and the role of the Sudanese diaspora, in an unbiased manner.



## CROSSOVER

The Hague Peace Projects also developed event and activities based on a theme instead of a certain country or conflict.

The **Freedom Book Fair** has become one of our biggest events. The theme 'Freedom' is central in all the different activities, for example freedom of expression, or freedom of press. The activities are organized by the working groups, and described in this report in the respective paragraphs.

An important innovation of this was the organization of **The Hague Hacks conference "Freedom and Technology,"** which brought together the world of peace and technology to create opportunities and build partnerships. By stimulating cooperation, The Hague Hacks promote development and the use of emerging technologies for peace and justice. This year, HPP investigated aspects of the relationship between technology and freedom. The intention is to delve deeper into the potential of creating peace and justice through technological solutions based on today's challenges.

Other events, mainly cultural and educational activities were the Open Mic Stand-Up Comedy night, Dance Jams multi-futurism, lectures about peace and conflict on schools, concerts etc. As was also shown in 2017, art and education create an excellent context for peaceful and innovative ways to promote unity and understanding.

Whether it is through visual art, music, or literature, these forms of expression are effective vehicles for sharing stories, ideas and feelings, and have proven to be interesting ways of establishing dialogue. Considering all the above-mentioned missions of The Hague Peace Projects, many more of such events will be organized through the Working Groups in the coming years.



# EVENTS / ACTIVITIES

2017

<b>5 January</b>	Film & Discussion: A Flood in Ba'ath Country
<b>7 January</b>	Syrian – Dutch winter concert
<b>11 January</b>	De Armeense holocaust
<b>18 January</b>	Bezoek aan vredespaleis
<b>21 January</b>	Integratie Caravan - Gouda
<b>22 February</b>	Charity Event: Open Mic Stand-Up Comedy – Amateur's Nights
<b>23-26 February</b>	International Uganda Convention in The Hague
<b>24-27 February</b>	The Hague Freedom Book Fair
<b>2 March</b>	Film and Discussion - Wit is ook een kleur
<b>16 March</b>	Discussion: Muslims represent!
<b>16 March</b>	Workshop: An Integration Introduction into the Dutch labour market
<b>26 March</b>	Turkish-Kurdish dialogue with the film director Asli Özarslan
<b>5 April</b>	Help, I vote against the Turkish referendum. Am I a terrorist now?
<b>3 May</b>	Turkije, op een kruispunt van dictatuur en democratie?
<b>5 May</b>	Integratie Caravan – Bevrijdingsdag Den Haag
<b>12 May</b>	Quiz night: Gender and Peace in the Great Lakes Region
<b>17 May</b>	Film & Discussion: The role of diaspora in peacebuilding
<b>7 June</b>	Queer ervaringen in de Turkse gemeenschap
<b>19-20 June</b>	Future of Syria Conference
<b>8 July</b>	Integratie Caravan - Tiel
<b>4-9 July</b>	Just Governance for Human Security Peace Conference in Caux, CH
<b>14 July</b>	Film & Discussion: Virunga – Env. Sustainability and Peace in DRC
<b>16 August</b>	Film & Discussion: Rampal Coal plant: a deception of development
<b>8 September</b>	Unmask the dictators from the great lakes region
<b>19 September</b>	Impro dance jams multi-futurism Activism & Dance
<b>21 September</b>	Cycling tour for the climate change
<b>22 September</b>	Screening first episode of the documentary series “Blood Brothers”
<b>29 September</b>	African Diaspora, Youth and Education in The Netherlands
<b>29 September</b>	Great Lakes Group Summary: Education and Career Advancement
<b>4 October</b>	Discussion: Wij vs Zij - Breaking News
<b>4 October</b>	Film & Discussion: NO
<b>28-29 October</b>	Festival Anatolië – On the way to school
<b>10-11 November</b>	Great Lakes Region Conference: Women and Men in Peacebuilding
<b>24 November</b>	In gesprek met ‘de vijand’
<b>2 December</b>	Slavery in Libya
<b>8 December</b>	The Hague Hacks Conference - Technology and Freedom



# LOOKING FORWARD TO

2018

THE  
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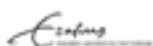


Thanks to the positive results achieved in 2017, HPP has consolidated its position in the national and international arena, and expanded its network and its possible range of partners, for new and interesting projects to come together in the near future. As shown by the creation of two new areas of concern, HPP is evolving fast. HPP plans to keep going forward, getting involved in more projects this year.

One of the first targets of HPP for 2018 was the new **Freedom Book Fair**, with the aim to host more publishers from different countries and to continue the discussions on Turkey and Somalia, which started in 2017. HPP's agenda also concentrates on the 2018 **Conference on the Great Lakes Region**, becoming an important platform for discussions concerning the updated situation of African countries. In 2018, HPP is also responsible for contributing to the **Movies that Matter Festival**, the **Liberation Day event** in The Hague, the **International Refugee Day Conference** — coming-up at the end of June, along with another edition of **The Hague Hacks**.

# PARTNERS

All our activities would not have been possible without the generous support of and collaboration with the following organizations. **Thank you all!!**



**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, ERASMUS UNIVERSITEIT, GEMEENTE DEN HAAG, FILMHUIS DEN HAAG, FREE PRESS UNLIMITED, HAELLA, HIVOS, IMPACT CITY, MOVIES THAT MATTER, ORANJE FONDS, PAX, PRODEMOS, GEMEENTE ROTTERDAM, VLUCHTELINGENWERK NEDERLAND, WIJDOENMEE**



**\*\*\* ANBI STATUS \*\*\***

*As a non-profit organization, the Hague Peace Projects has been assigned the ANBI status by the Dutch Tax Agency. With this status, donations can be deducted from your taxable income. If you are interested in supporting us, please feel free to get in touch.*





# CONTACT

For more details on our past activities and to keep up to date on our current and coming activities, you can consult our **website** or connect through **Facebook**, **Twitter** or **Instagram**.

Additionally, if you are interesting in joining us, making a donation, or using our expertise, you are welcome to contact us through email or telephone, or visit our office.

## **The Hague Peace Projects**

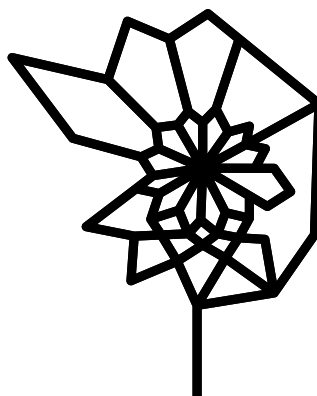
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