



# THE HAGUE PEACE PROJECTS



# 2019

ANNUAL REPORT

# Contents

I. Introduction.....	3
II. Programs.....	4
1. Turkish-Kurdish Dialogue.....	5
2. Great Lakes Region.....	6
3. Bangladesh.....	7
4. The Freedom Book Fair.....	8
5. The Hague Hacks.....	9
III. Events & Activities.....	10
IV. Donors.....	11



# I. INTRODUCTION

The Hague Peace Projects with pride wishes to outline the achievements and all the hard work that entailed the year 2019. In this annual report, we will cover the engagements and the events of the year and give prospects and projections for the activities in the coming year.

Like always, the HPP engaged with various stakeholders and actors in the field of Human Rights, Research, Peace-building, stability and Education. These events attracted a number of academicians with different expertise who guided and shared their knowledge with our participants.

At The Hague Peace Projects, we hold true the importance of bringing various actors together, like human rights defenders and activists, victims of rights abuses as well as academicians and experts in these field such that they all share and learn from each other's experiences. The HPP believes that this practice would enable these categories to develop meaningful ways to resolve conflicts and other challenges through peaceful means and dialogue.

Our organisation comprises of various working groups, which are different from each other in relation to objectives, size, nature of dialogues and participants. Currently, these groups include Turkish-Kurdish Dialogue, Bangladesh, The Great Lakes Region, The Hague Hacks and Freedom Book Fair. The above working groups are at the centre of our activities as we aim to raise awareness amongst their population in the Netherlands.

In this annual report, we are gratified to report the successes and achievements of the year 2019. We are proud to have had a fruitful year 2019 that saw our organisation engage in various activities and expand its networks. We increased our human resource, our events increased and our monthly meetings and yearly projects registered a significant improvement.

In the year 2019 we devoted our energies towards activities that included research, social, education and culture and artistic events, entirely intended to generate a system of people that would empower and foster amicable conflict resolution and meaningful social transformation. Dialogue between various diaspora community groups in The Netherlands were initiated by the organisation. This was aimed at bringing people with differing views on all issues that divide us in the communities we live in. Enabling people to build confidence and belief in peaceful means as they expressed themselves.

We are convinced that this accomplishment gives the pathway for continuation in respect for human rights, peace building and forging unity amongst the diaspora community in The Netherlands. Below are the parts detailing these achievements of The Hague Peace Projects.

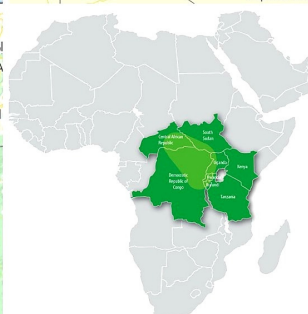
## THE HAGUE PEACE PROJECTS TEAM MEMBERS



# II. PROGRAMS

## Our Projects

### THE HAGUE PEACE PROJECTS



#### WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

We believe in a world where conflicts between human beings, groups of people and countries are not solved by violence and the law of the jungle, but through dialogue, respect for human rights and human dignity, and honest cooperation between equals. We believe that conflicts cannot be solved sustainably through outside or top-down intervention alone. Only through a concerted effort by an inclusive civil society, can real political and social transformation be achieved. Acknowledging the role of diaspora communities from conflict areas as potential catalysts for both conflict and peace building, we believe they have a special role to play in this process. Together we can build a world free from fear of violence or oppression

#### WHAT WE DO

We build communities of trust in places where division and fear between people is the norm. By creating safe spaces for dialogue, we establish new, unlikely connections and ultimately a common ground between communities across all lines that keep people divided: religious, ethnic, national or political. Starting by diaspora communities, we empower people to reconstruct their motivation and skills to deal with conflicts peacefully, using a wide range of tools such as research, advocacy, education, cultural events and media. Together we aim to contribute to building well-informed, resilient, vocal, globally connected & inclusive civil societies in areas affected by conflict and oppression, capable of realizing nonviolent social and political transformation.

#### WHO WE ARE

The Hague Peace Projects is a young and dynamic peace organization based in The Hague, The Netherlands: the "International City of Peace and Justice". Our energetic and dedicated team consists of young professionals from all over the world with a broad expertise in conflict prevention, peace building and human rights. Many of us have personally lived through circumstances of violence and oppression in our countries of origin and use this experience to be catalysts of peace, nearby and far away.

# TURKISH-KURDISH DIALOGUE

The year 2019 was a year of much success that saw us organise various events as part of the Hague Peace Projects. We carried out various events that carried different themes such as:



## Muslims in Dutch Papers: August 2018-April 2020. Stichting Democritie en Media:

We carried out research 2018-2020 on how Muslims in Dutch Papers are portrayed, this was done in collaboration with Stichting Nieuw Wij en Republiek Allochtonie. Over 100 people attended the report presentation at Pakhuis de Zwijger. As a result, a couple of events at debate centres and Partners Pakhuis de Zwijger followed and we concluded with the possibility of follow-up research in 2020, code named "Muslims on TV."

## Debate: Toerkoes in Nieuws-West (Are you Turkish or Moroccan?)

This program started in October 2018 in cooperation with Pakhuis de Zwijger focusing on participation, integration and dialogue as main pillars. The program continued into 2019 with the event "Ben jij nou Turks of Marokkaans?" on 26 March, 2019. It attracted several speakers and attendees.

## Dinner and Talks: Toerkoes in Nieuw-West (Ramadan Special) 21 May 2019

Dinner was organised during the feast month of Ramadan with international speakers. Speakers included, Mohammed Kanfash from Syria and Shucheesmita Simonti from Bangladesh. We discussed the meaning of the month of Ramadan for Muslims, the differences of the month in the country of origin and The Netherlands.

## Towards a Joint Commemoration: Commemoration Armenian Genocide and The Hague Peace Projects: 30 March, 2019

The Federation Armenian Organisations (FAON) in The Netherlands came together with the Kurds and Turks to commemorate the Armenian genocide in Assen. A preliminary dialogue event was held in The Hague at the Armenian Centre Abovian. Here, we listened to personal stories of Kurds and Turks members and FAON representatives.

## Film and Debate: Toekoes in Nieuw-West (Game of Thronising vd. Maatschappij 09 July 2019)

This event discussed the final episodes of the HBO-series Game of Thrones that were being discussed widely in the Dutch Media but it was noticeable that this discussion had left out people of colour. Noticing this, the Game of Thrones event was organised with speakers showing some parts of the series and explaining some scenes in the series and what it meant to participants socially. Both the people of colour and the Dutch professed to have had fun during the events.

## Debate Housing Crisis: Toerkoes in Nieuw-West. (40 jaar bij je ouders wonen) 01 October 2019

The debate was organised regarding the housing problem in The Netherlands. This was informed after recognizing that the communities of Dutch-Armenian-Kurdish-Turkish are among the low income groups, that face somewhat more socio-economic challenges especially in housing. This was on the background that some people are forced to live with their parents until the age of 40.

## Language Event: Toerkoes in Nieuw-West (Meertalig Opgroeien: doe de licht!) 03 December 2019

Recognizing that language can be source of insecurity, it was an appreciation that our communities were faced with the challenges of expressing themselves and thus, the event was organised where the possible insecurities were talked about with the help of academic speakers and other individuals.



# GREAT LAKES REGION

The Great Lakes Region held a number of Meetings which attracted persons of different experiences of the region as well as friends of the region. The meetings also discussed issues regarding Leadership of the region, Unity amongst the region diaspora and organised a demonstration in solidarity of Nyamulenge ethnic group as will be explained below:

## **Meet-Up: "Should good Presidents (in the Great Lakes Region) be allowed to stay longer than the constitution allows them to"**

Having witnessed the leadership of the Great Lakes States take the similar trend, with Uganda experiencing stability, peace and development in the last 31 years of President Museveni, Rwanda becoming a model state in Central Africa in terms of stability, peace and development in the past 25 years with President Kagame being praised, he has since amended the constitution to extend his leadership until 2034.

This has seen similar moves by President Nkurunziza of Burundi as he run for a controversial third term out side the constitutional mandate of 10 years. While President Kabila was not to be left behind as he postponed presidential elections for 2 years as he continued to be a president.

Based on this background, different personalities came together on 28 June 2019 to discuss different scenarios while trying ascertain what the future holds for the states in the region.

## **Uniting the Diaspora of The Great Lakes Region**

Peace building being one of the aspirations of the Great Lakes Region working group, whilst acknowledging the persistent divisions along nationality and ethnic lines continue to manifest within the diaspora through mistrust, grievances, misunderstandings and misinformation thrive. Appreciating the situation, the GLR working group and friends came together on the 25 October 2019 to discuss on the possibilities of uniting and empowering the GLR diaspora people so that they can their potential in finding and implementing peaceful agenda in the the region.

A number of possible advances towards uniting the GLR diaspora were proposed and the GLR team leaders promised to select the best workable solutions that will be implemented in the year 2020.

## **Banyamulenge: Ethnic and Identity Politics in the DRC Since February tensions between different ethnic**

The tensions and confrontation amongst the ethnic groups in the DRC as early as February 2019 motivated the GLR to hold a meeting to discus these tensions that had claimed lives of over 200 and 200,000 people displaced by the meeting date. The tension was exacerbated by the involvement of the Mai Mai militias and the Banyamulenge militias. This resulted in the attacks against the Banyamulenge population and assassination of Banyindu chief presumably by Banyamulenge though it is also said that rebels from neighbouring states are also suspect in this conflict.

There was minimal media coverage amidst this human suffering and therefore, the meeting discussed ways of raising awareness regarding this humanitarian crisis, ways to avert identity politics and well as how the GLR diaspora could contribute to reaching a peaceful solution to this conflict.



# BANGLADESH



We the Bangladesh Work group engaged in various events of The Hague Peace Projects. The is headed by Shucheesmita Simonti with Alena Kahle, Madeleine Meisjes, and Shafayet Choudhury as team members of the group.

The year 2019 saw the work group engage in a number of activities as follows:

#### **Research on Syncretism:**

We carried out interviews with academicians and religious figures that are actively involved in promoting the notion of inter-faith harmony. These interviews contributed greatly to our research on syncretism in Bengali society that dates as back as precolonial times.

#### **Freedom Book Fair 2019:**

More still, we organised the panel discussion titled "Suppressed Voices: Freedom of Expression under threat in Bangladesh" that was moderated by Shafayet Choudhury.

The Panelists were Bonya Ahmed and Parvez Alam, both are well known writers and activists from Bangladesh. The discussion was centered around the recent political landscape in Bangladesh and how the Bangladesh diaspora in Europe continue to write and raise their voices.

#### **Collaboration with Humane First Movement:**

The year 2019 witnessed the work group signing a memorandum of understanding with Humane First Movement which is an initiative to promote interfaith harmony in Bangladesh. Mr. Jacob De Jonge the Director of the Hague Peace Projects and Ajanta Deb Roy, the founder of the movement signed the memorandum of understanding. In this understanding the Bangladesh work group will work together as advocates of social cohesion while advancing the same among Bangladesh diaspora in Europe.

#### **Hague Hacks Festival 2019**

During the Hague Hacks Festival 2019, we organised a workshop titled "Breaking the Patriarchy." The workshop was spearheaded by Shucheesmita Simonti and participants included the Bangladesh HRDs.



# FREEDOM BOOK FAIR

The 2019 Freedom Book Fair (“Reclaiming Space”) as the theme, opened with a short presentation followed by question and answers session, with Najat eL Hani, the cultural anthropologist, a teacher and photographer, with Carol Maarsen and Elles Steinvooorte initiating the process. It was a three-day event that took place on the 02 to 04 May at the Migration Museum.

Realizing the role Human Rights defenders play in societies around the world, the discussions concerned the situation in Tajikistan, Bangladesh and Nicaragua. As well, ambassador Marriet Schuurman discussing how the Netherlands operates in their support for free expression world over. The festival was a great success with the following events below:

- 3 May, Dialogue: Living Library
- 3 May, Documentary + Q&A: ¡Las Sandinistas!
- 3 MAY, Panel Discussion: Freedom of Expression in Bangladesh
- 3 May, Paneldiscussie: Het andere gezicht-Persvrijheid in Marokko
- 3 May, Modern Kurdish Literature-Kawa Nemir
- 3 May, Panel Discussion: Reclaiming Space through Writing
- 3 May, Panel Discussion: Nicaragua in Retrospect
- 4 May, Freedom Book Fair: This three-day festival was aimed at encouraging dialogue and our speakers were able to show case the importance of dialogue and creation of new narratives.
- 4 May, Documentary + Q&A: Two Lives One World



- 4 May, Poetry Translation Workshop
- 4 May, Documentary + Q&A: Verblijvend in Rotterdam
- 4 May, Boekpresentatie: Mamby, Terug naar het Begin
- 4 May, Panel Discussion: Sudan's Uprising and its Challenges
- 4 May, Violence & Physical Theatre Workshop
- 4 May, Poetry from Honduras and Afghanistan
- 4 May, Performance: Baba, come to me
- 4 May, New European Ensemble + Homaira Nakhat Dastgirzada & Lety Elvir
- 4 May, Performance: Bacanal Chipote
- 4 May, Panel Discussion: A closer look at Arabic Literature in Europe





# THE HAGUE HACKS

The Hague Hacks Festival is a multidisciplinary idea-creation event in which human rights defenders engage with a wide diversity of expertise across different sectors to share their experiences and unpack human rights violations to brainstorm ideas and possible tech solutions.

The Hague Hacks Festival 2019 was a tremendous success and a humbling Festival that attracted a total of 120 participants. It was the most international and most productive and we look forward to continuing our engagement with all stakeholders of this Festival.

It is important to note that The Hague Hacks Festival is not just a one-day event. Various ideas were generated from the Festival, an independent assessment committee will determine which workable ideas that will enter our "Design for Activism Program."

By positioning itself at the intersection of public, corporate, academic, and governmental sectors, The Hague Hacks strives to remove collaborative obstacles and bridge existing knowledge gaps with human rights activism. The core philosophy of this approach is not only to capitalize and expand on trans-disciplinary and cross-sector expertise but is also to empower migrant groups in their problem-ownership and their capacity to address the human rights issues in their communities.

In 2019, The Hague Hacks Festival's theme was:

**Set Free' Tech to Empower Human Rights and Freedoms.** We focused on the following five global challenges to human rights and freedoms:

- 'By the People, For the People' Political Participation / Nicaragua (How can technology reach out and unite the diaspora to coordinate and re-appropriate the Nicaraguan Government?)
- 'Breaking the Patriarchy' Gender Inequality / Bangladesh (How can tech be used more effectively to address gender inequality in Bangladesh? How do we spread the message of gender equality effectively and safely for a more just society?)
- 'informationvs. indoctrination' Peace Education / Netherlands, Northern Ireland, Turkey/Kurdistan, North Korea (How can tech humanize "The Other" and bring people together?)
- 'Right to Rally' Expression & Association / Hong Kong: UDHR. Art. 19, 20 (How can new technologies enable safer, stronger and more effective protests?)

'our home and native Planet' Environment and Human Rights / Global: Multiple countries Human Rights reference: UDHR. Art. 3, 4, 7, 19, 20 (How can technology predict and prove the link between environmental destruction and human rights challenges, and help to empower environmental activists advocating the rights of people and the planet?)

At The Hague Hacks Festival, we bring together tech experts, software developers, designers, engineers, etc., as well as H.R.D.s and diaspora members together. This plurality of perspectives enriches the problem-solving process and leads to innovative new tech ideas for human rights advocacy.



BORDER SESSIONS



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# EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

- 21 March \_\_\_ Muslims in Dutch Newspapers
- 26 March \_\_\_ Are You Turkish or Moroccan?
- 30 March \_\_\_ Towards a Joint Commemoration: The Armenian Genocide in Assen
- 02 May \_\_\_ Exhibition: Freedom of Stories
- 02 May \_\_\_ Opening Night: Freedom Book Fair
- 02 May \_\_\_ Jazz for Syria
- 03 May \_\_\_ Dialogue Living Library
- 03 May \_\_\_ Documentary + Q&A: Las Sandinistas
- 04 May \_\_\_ Freedom Book Fair 2019
- 04 May \_\_\_ Poetry Translation Workshop
- 04 May \_\_\_ Panel Discussion: Sudan's Uprising
- 21 May \_\_\_ ToerKoes in Nieuw-West: Ramadan Special
- 26 May \_\_\_ Redefining Stories
- 13 June \_\_\_ Design for Activism- Border Sessions
- 20 June \_\_\_ Music Narrative Dinner Exile, at Home, Everywhere
- 28 June \_\_\_ Meet Up: The Great Lakes Region (GLR)
- 09 July \_\_\_ ToerKoes in Nieuw-West: Game of Thrones
- 01 October \_\_\_ ToerKoes in Nieuw-West: Living with Your Parents for 40 Years
- 12 October \_\_\_ Rise Up for Rojava Den Haag
- 25 October \_\_\_ Uniting the Great Lakes Region Diaspora
- 03 December \_\_\_ Close the Lights! About Growing Up Multilingual
- 06 December \_\_\_ The Hague Hacks feat Imre Ploeg & Emlyn Stam
- 12 December \_\_\_ Banyamulenge: Ethnic and Identity Politics in the DRC





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BORDER SESSIONS



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Thank You!



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PEACE  
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For more details on our past activities and to keep up to date on our current and upcoming activities, you engage with our website and connect on our social platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

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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.

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