

# HALVING GLOBAL VIOLENCE

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## VISION AND STRATEGY



**PATHFINDERS**

FOR PEACEFUL, JUST AND INCLUSIVE SOCIETIES  
HOSTED BY THE NYU CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

# Halving Global Violence: Vision and Strategy

August 2020

The Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies

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# Acknowledgements

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# Executive Summary: Can we halve global violence in a post-COVID-19 world?

With the onset of COVID-19, the world is entering a volatile, unstable and disorderly phase. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only overwhelming health systems. It is set to generate the worst global economic downturn since the 1930s and it is widely expected that these disruptions will generate economic hardship, particularly among informal workers and vulnerable populations. Although the current focus on the health emergency and economic fallout is warranted, rising unemployment, food insecurity and spreading grievances mean that security will soon dominate the global agenda. More than ever, in this time of COVID-19, the international community must focus on peace and security.

On the one hand, there is evidence that COVID-19—and government attempts to contain it—contributed to declines in some types of violent crime. During the first months of the pandemic, some countries registered declines of various types of criminal violence after the enforcement of physical distancing, curfews, and quarantining measures to slow the virus. On the other hand, reported domestic abuse and sexual violence exploded. These improvements in security were fleeting, however, and levels of criminal and homicidal violence appear to be climbing once more in countries such as Brazil, El Salvador, and South Africa.

The pandemic is having a limited effect on diminishing the frequency or intensity of armed conflict. Despite a call for a global ceasefire by the UN Secretary-General, political violence did not significantly decline between January and May 2020, even in countries that appeared initially receptive. With some exceptions, conflict violence actually increased in most conflict-affected countries following the call for a ceasefire. Yet some armed groups appear to have instead taken the opportunity to ramp up disinformation campaigns and accelerate attacks against government and civilian targets. Unsurprisingly, many non-state armed groups are determined not to let a good crisis go to waste.

The COVID-19 pandemic, including government responses to it, is transforming the opportunity structure for states, non-state actors and individuals. For example, there are indications that state repression is rising, including forceful efforts to enforce quarantine and shelter-in-place orders. The deployment of military and police personnel has the potential to undermine trust, escalate social unrest, and even strengthen the power and influence of criminal groups, especially in lower- and middle-income settings. Likewise, organized crime groups such as cartels and gangs are facing increased competition owing to supply and demand shocks, and disputes over trade routes and distribution points are also contributing to explosive violence, not least in Mexico.

Well before the onset of COVID-19, the world was experiencing dangerous levels of violence. The Uppsala Conflict Data Program reported that roughly 82,000 people were killed in armed conflicts in 2018 and more than 70 million people were dislocated as refugees or internally displaced people (IDPs) as of that same year. According to the Small Arms Survey, a total of 596,000 people were murdered in 2018 (the last year for which aggregate data is available), most of them outside conflict zones. Roughly 16% of them women. Surveys by UNICEF suggest that over a billion children are victims of some form of violence every year. The COVID-19 pandemic, and the failure of governments to adequately respond, could accelerate some of these trends in the months and years ahead.

Delivering on the 2030 Agenda, including significantly preventing and reducing violence, has become even more challenging in the context of COVID-19. Research conducted for this strategic paper before the COVID-19 outbreak indicated that overall levels of violence would worsen between 2020 and 2030 in a ‘business as usual’ scenario. If early intervention is undertaken it is more likely that the number of countries affected by

armed conflict and organized violence could decline. The economic returns of halving conflict violence alone by 2030 are significant – up to \$2 trillion dollars. This strategic paper also highlights future trends for interpersonal violence. It finds that homicide rates will continue drifting upward, especially in Latin America and the Caribbean, if actions are not taken immediately. The positive news is that violence is not inevitable – there are options to prevent and decrease it at this critical juncture. Moreover, we have more knowledge and tools to help prevent conflict, reduce crime, and disrupt violence against women and children than ever before.

The Pathfinders is committed to launching and supporting a global movement to halve violence by 2030. We have already developed a framework of commitments, evidence of how to achieve them, and have gathered examples of successful implementation. This is not a radical proposition. Specifically, there is a binding political commitment by UN member states in SDG 16.1 requiring signatories to, “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere.” States have also agreed in SDG16.2 to, “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation” and “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.” Moreover, there are many examples of countries and cities that have, with the right combination of leadership, interventions, resourcing and monitoring, delivered significant reductions in violence in a short period of time. Halving violence is possible; indeed, it has never been more important, given the threat multiplier of COVID-19 and the urgency of investing in violence reduction and prevention as a bulwark against insidious losses to the pandemic. The question is whether, and how, the appropriate level of political will and economic investment can be mustered.

The Pathfinders is helping to support a broad coalition of partners working across multiple fields and sectors to reduce violence by 50 percent over the next ten years. To accomplish this, Pathfinders is partnering with a variety of national governments, city authorities, international, national and grassroots non-governmental organizations, as well as business and philanthropic groups to first ensure that this goal is prominent on the global agenda, and then to scale-up concrete and practical investments at the national and city scale over the coming decade. The coalition is determined to prevent and reduce multiple categories of violence – including conflict and armed violence, urban and criminal violence, interpersonal violence (including violence against women and children), mass atrocities, and extremism. To this end, Pathfinders aims to bolster existing efforts and build support for newer ones between 2020 and 2030.

The preliminary groundwork for the movement was set out at the initial meeting of experts, practitioners, and officials hosted by the Pathfinders and Wilton Park in the summer of 2020. The gathered participants agreed that recruiting a variety of political champions facing different violence challenges under the banner of a movement, supporting local solutions, and doubling down on finance for interventions that have proven to work are essential next steps in the movement’s formation and launch.

# Introduction

The world is entering an unstable and dangerous new phase. The COVID-19 pandemic is not only overwhelming health systems, it giving rise to tremendous economic hardship. What is more, measures to enforce COVID-19, including the excessive use of force by police, are intensifying grievances of people around the world. The risks of rapidly escalating violence are especially acute in countries already affected by armed conflict or that are emerging from war. This is due in part to severe economic stress, especially low per capita income, unemployment and inequality that can deepen resentment and lower the opportunity costs of joining armed groups. But the threat of violence is also present in middle- and upper-income countries, where deep inequalities and declining trust are also present.

Even before the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the world was experiencing an epidemic of violence. At least one in six people on earth claimed to be a victim of violence in 2019.<sup>1</sup> Every year, it kills, injures and traumatizes millions of people around the world. At least 82,000 people were killed in armed conflicts in 2018 and another 70 million people are now dislocated as refugees or internally displaced people. Mass atrocities and extremist violence are also responsible for the death and maiming of tens of thousands every year. An estimated 596,000 people in total were killed in 2018—many of them women and children—and most of them outside war zones. A billion children and at least a third of all women in their lifetimes were victims of violence.

Violence is a universal challenge faced by all societies. Even so, certain countries, cities, neighborhoods and households are more affected than others. This is because, like infectious diseases such as COVID-19, violence tends to concentrate in specific places, among certain population groups, and in relation to risky behaviors. What is more, the underlying determinants of violence are comparatively similar across time and space. Risk factors include political exclusion, economic, ethnic and gender inequalities, social immobility, youth unemployment, impunity, and a host of behavioral characteristics. Key to treating violence, then, is an effective diagnosis of its causes and effects. Fortunately, this is a disease that is preventable and curable. As the world prepares to “build back” after COVID-19, it is critical that the recovery be a bridge to a more peaceful future, taking this opportunity to “design-in” measures to prevent and reduce violence.

The Pathfinders for Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies is helping to craft and support a global movement to halve violence by 2030. It is partnering with national governments, city authorities, international and grassroots non-governmental organizations, and businesses to first prioritize and then accelerate concrete and practical efforts to achieve this goal. The coalition is determined to prevent and reduce several categories of violence – including conflict and armed violence, urban and criminal violence, interpersonal violence (with a focus on violence against women and children), mass atrocities and violent extremism. To this end, Pathfinders aims to bolster existing efforts, and identify and strengthen new ones between 2020 and 2030. The movement coincides with the 75th Anniversary of the UN and the Decade of Action to accelerate the SDGs.

The movement to halve violence by 2030 is not a radical proposition. There is already a binding political commitment by UN member states in SDG 16.1 requiring signatories to “significantly reduce all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere”. States have also agreed in SDG 16.2 to, “eliminate all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation” and “end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, there are many examples of countries and cities that have, with the right combination of leadership, interventions, resourcing, and monitoring, delivered stunning reductions in violence in a short period of time. The focus of the coalition in the short-term is to build on and further

develop a shared evidence base, and to forge a strong coalition. In the medium- to long-term the aim is to strengthen financing, implementation, and measurement.

This report forms the basis of a strategic plan to launch the movement to halve violence by 2030. It is intended to help define the overall goal of the movement, and opportunities for action in the next decade. The first section provides a short overview of the scope and scale of different categories of violence. Section two examines future trajectories of violence and the costs and benefits of inaction. The third section explores strategies with a provide track record to reduce violence. In section four there is an explanation of the overall principles and activities of the movement in 2020 with a view to 2030. The report closes with a short list of recommendations.



# Scope and Scale of the Movement to Halve Violence

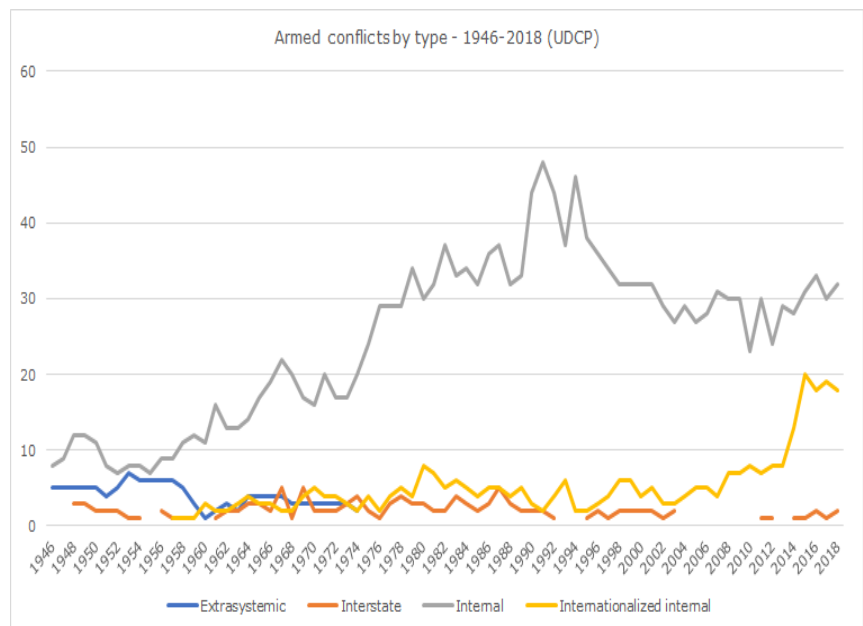
The overall goal for the movement to halve violence by 2030 is to save lives and improve overall safety. This is expected to be achieved by accelerating national and subnational action and investment in data-driven and evidence-based strategies to prevent and reduce violence. The movement is inspired directly by SDG16.1 and 16.2, that call for, “significantly reduc[ing] all forms of violence and related death rates everywhere,” “eliminat[ing] all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation,” and, “end[ing] abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children.”<sup>3</sup> While these targets are agreed by all UN member states, SDG16 is still discounted and under-funded.

The movement is committed to demonstrably halving the number of victims of lethal violence as a result of conflict and armed violence, urban and criminal violence, interpersonal violence, mass atrocities, and violent extremism. These types of violence are among the most serious and have considerable knock-on effects on all other SDGs. The movement is also committed to curbing the proportion of people subjected to physical, psychological and sexual violence, and improving the perception of safety and security.<sup>4</sup> Likewise, it is also seeking to dramatically reduce the proportion of children who experience physical punishment/ aggression from caretakers, the incidence of human trafficking, and young women and men experiencing sexual violence.<sup>5</sup>

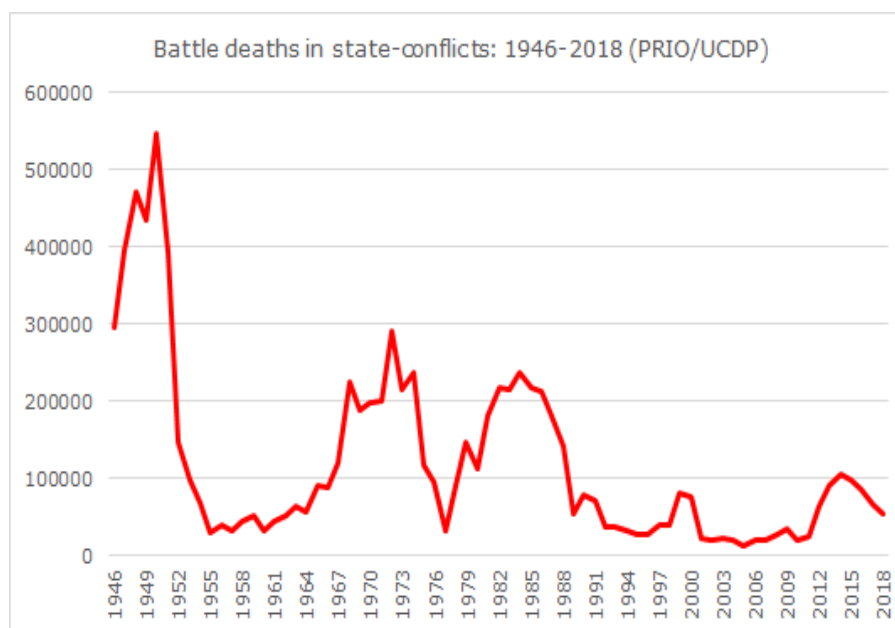
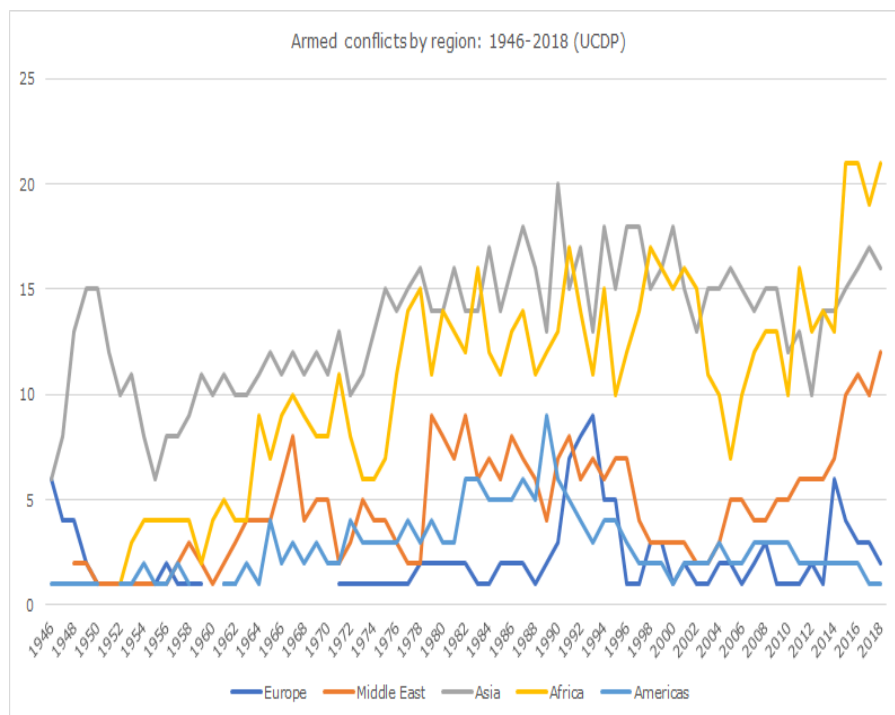
Any effort to prevent and reduce violence requires acknowledging the wider dimensions of the phenomena. In this section we examine the scope and scale of the aforementioned categories of violence. The analysis is not exhaustive, but sets out a full agenda for the movement. The scientific consensus is that the world is quantitatively less violent today than virtually any other period since the middle of the twentieth century (in terms of total number of people killed), but potentially more unstable and disorderly. There is also evidence that a relatively small number of regions, countries, and even cities are responsible for an outsized burden of violence. Just a handful of countries account for more than half of all conflict deaths, intentional homicides, lethal violence involving women and children, mass atrocities and extremist killings.

## Conflict and Armed Violence

Humankind has spent more time engaged in wars and armed conflicts than at peace. Yet for several reasons, the frequency and intensity of large-scale international conflicts declined since the middle of the twentieth century. By contrast, lower intensity internal conflicts exploded in incidence and complexity. Many of the roughly 50 ongoing intra-state and civil wars today have dozens of non-state armed groups making them hard to solve. A growing number

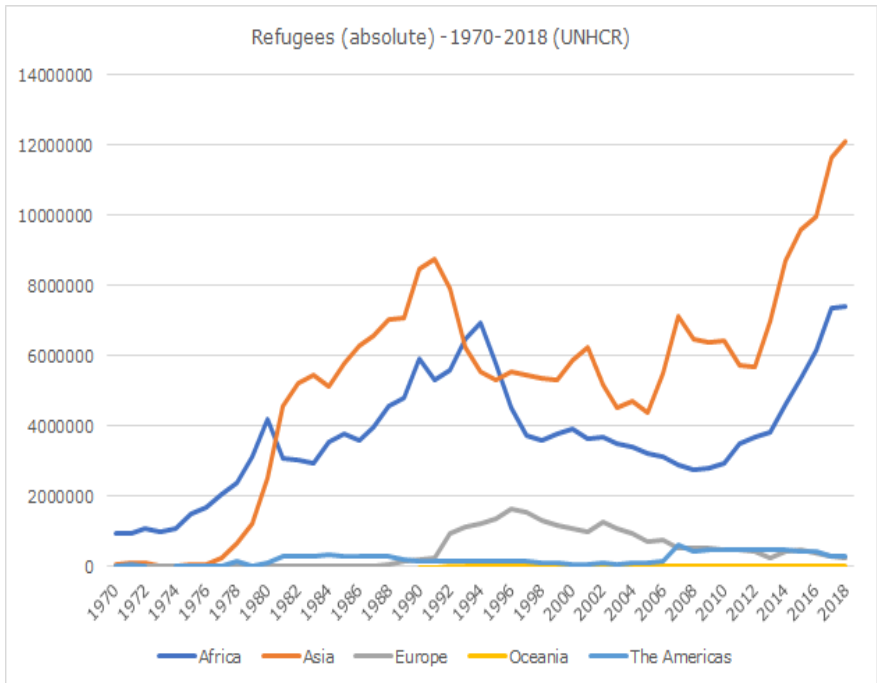


have also internationalized, with parties fighting for a combination of political, social and economic reasons.



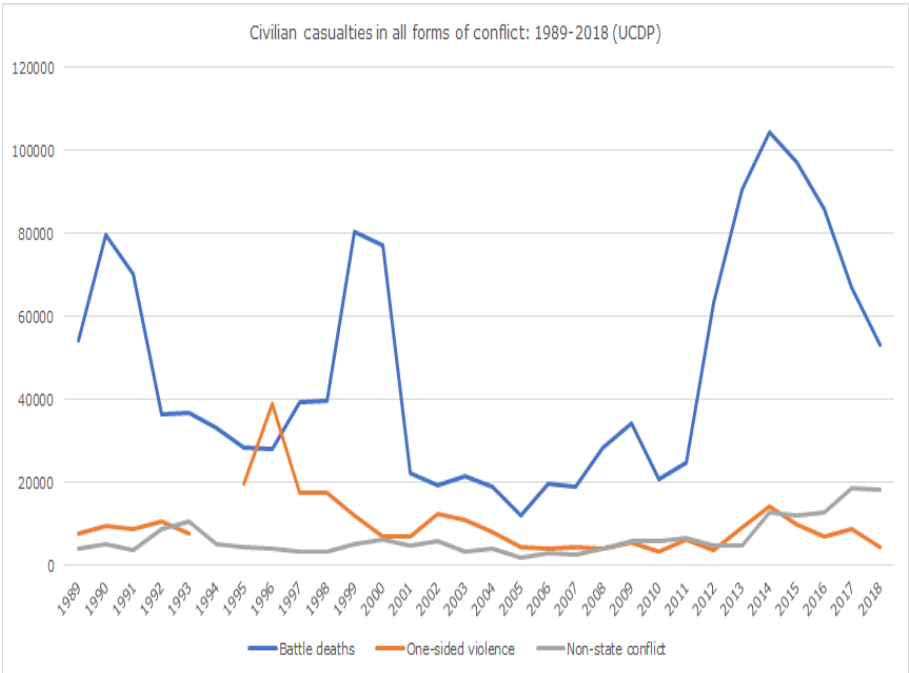
Most contemporary conflicts involve the targeting of civilians and are occurring in Africa, Asia and the Middle East. On average, between 72,000 and 82,000 people were killed a year in conflict over the past decade. Depending on the nature of the conflict, national social and economic conditions, and the capabilities of domestic health systems, between 1 and 15 times more people may die indirectly from preventable disease and illness. In addition to those who are killed during or in the wake of conflict are an estimated 26 million refugees and 40 million internally displaced people, many of whom are women and

children. In many cases, sexual and gender-based violence is used as a weapon of war. In addition to their human costs, these conflicts have ruinous economic effects.



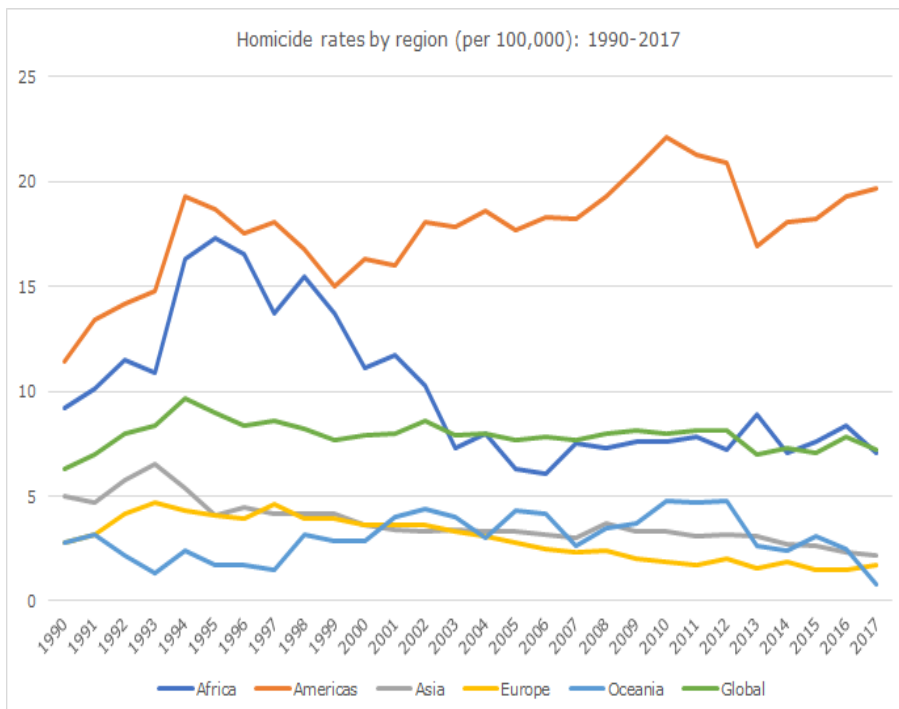
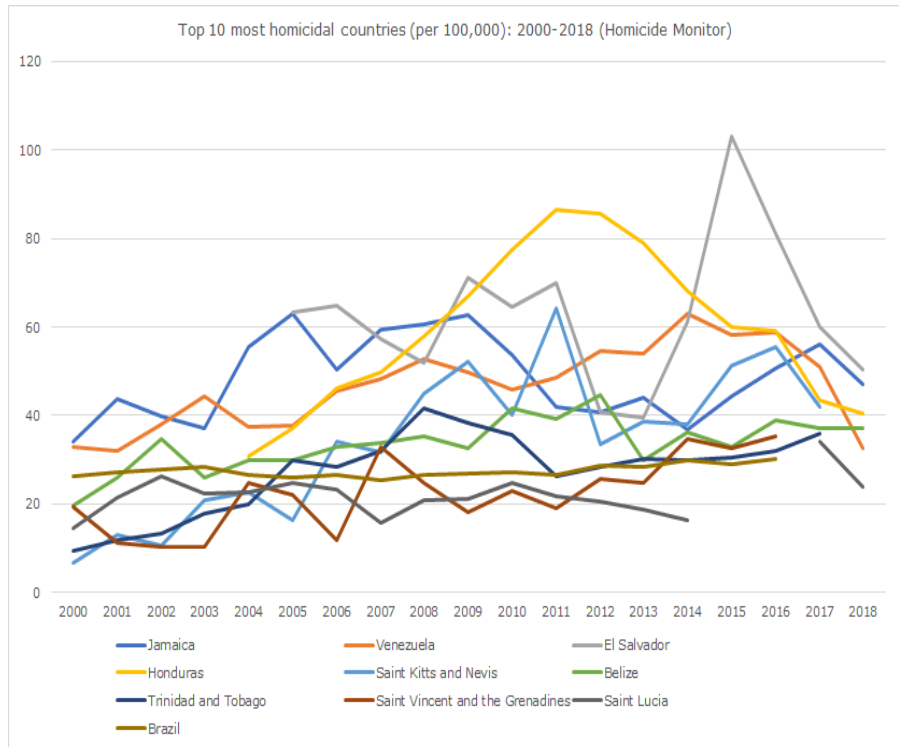
A handful of countries are responsible for a disproportionate share of contemporary conflict-related violence. In 2018, just four countries—Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria and Yemen—accounted for almost three quarters of all conflict deaths. Even so, internal conflicts in parts of Africa—especially the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Niger, Nigeria, Somalia, and Sudan—or complex conflicts in the Philippines, Ukraine—generate a high human toll. What is more, over two thirds of reported mass atrocities occur during ongoing conflicts (with the remainder transpiring outside of them).<sup>6</sup>

There are several factors that help statistically explain the decline in certain types of conflict and conflict-related deaths. These include, inter alia, the consolidation of representative democracies, the strengthening of state institutions (including those guaranteeing political inclusion and rule of law), the roll-out of over 1,500 peace-related agreements, truces and ceasefires, the deployment of over 70 peace-support operations since their establishment, improved gender representation and empowerment of women, and sustained and equitable economic growth. Focusing on preventing conflicts before they escalate, ensuring timely and robust peace support to reduce violence, and investment in countries and cities experiencing fragility is key to reducing violence overall.



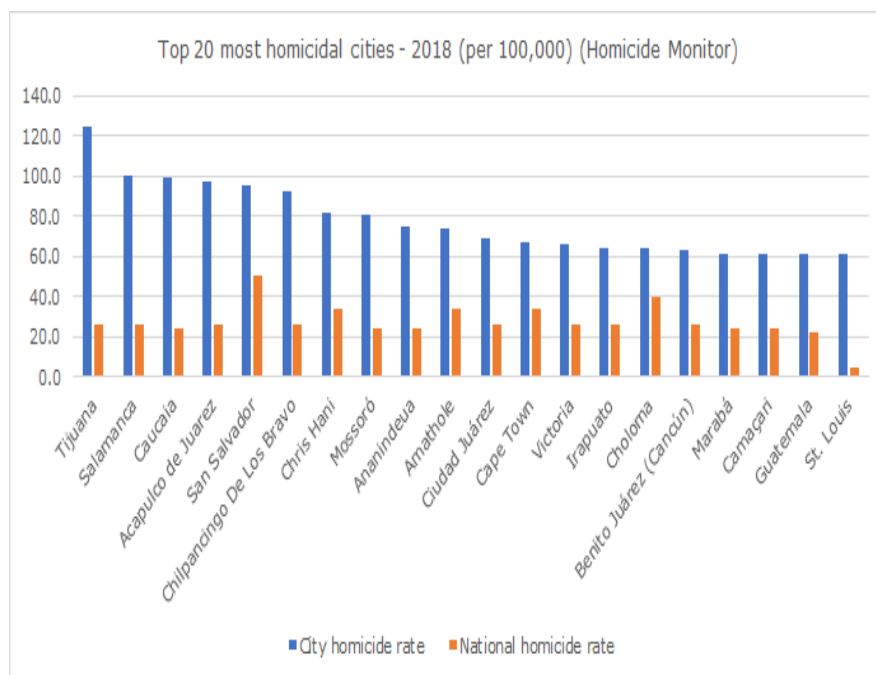
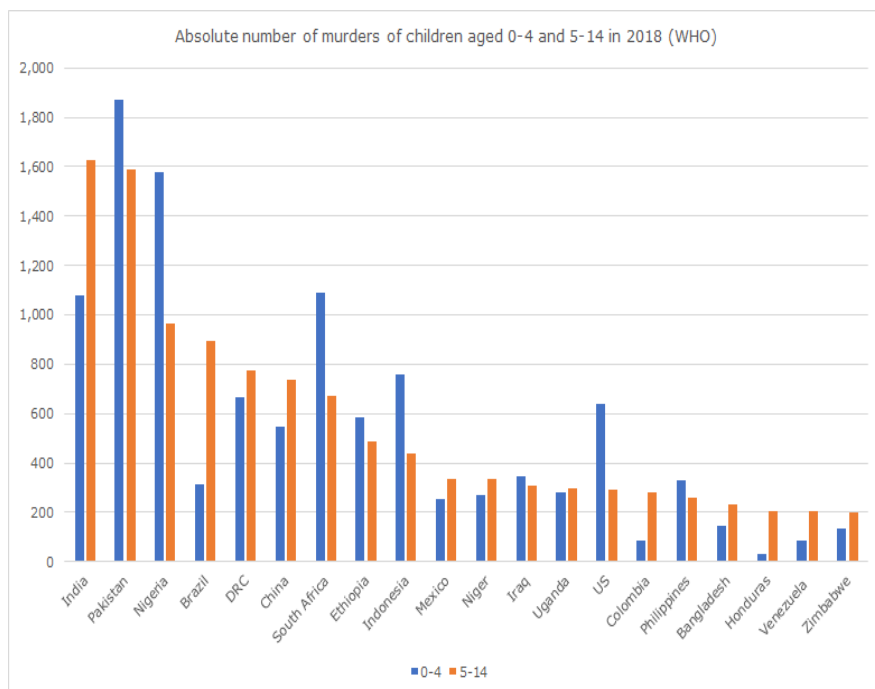
## Urban and Criminal Violence

Urban and criminal violence—and in particular homicide—are pervasive challenges globally, though are much more concentrated in some parts of the world than others. More than 596,000 people were murdered in 2018, the last year for which standardized data is available. This translates into an international baseline of 6.1 per 100,000, which is only slightly lower than the global rate in the 1990s (7.2 per 100,000). Yet by far the highest concentration of intentional homicide is in Latin America and the Caribbean, which registers a regional rate of 17.2 per 100,000 – three times higher than the global average. African homicide rates are closer to 13 per 100,000, though likely higher due to poor reporting. Murder has declined in most other parts of the world to levels below the global average.



There is considerable inter- and intra-regional variation in the intensity of homicide. Latin America and the Caribbean concentrate 37% of all homicides yet are home to just 8% of the global population. Africa and Asia together concentrate 58% of all homicides with over 71% of the global population. Just seven countries—Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, India, Nigeria, South Africa and the US—make up roughly half of the global homicide burden. If measured by prevalence, however, countries such as El Salvador, Honduras, Jamaica, and Venezuela are among the most homicidal.

Homicidal violence tends to be hyper-concentrated in metropolitan and urban spaces. For example, 43 of the 50 most homicidal cities are located in Latin America and the Caribbean. What is more, in many of the regions' cities, 90% of all reported homicides concentrate in a small minority of neighborhoods. Similar forms of concentration and clustering also evidence in cities in the Americas, Africa, Europe, the Middle East, East and South Asia, and Oceania. In general, areas of concentrated disadvantage, heightened political, economic and social exclusion, high levels of social disorganization, and where community trust in state institutions is weak suffer from higher levels of violence.



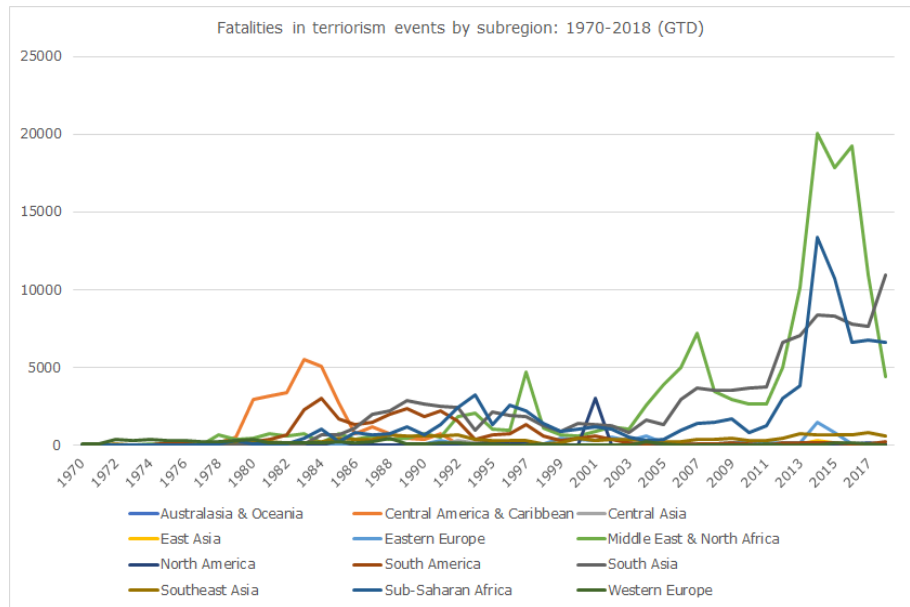
Some population groups suffer disproportionately from collective and interpersonal violence, including homicide. Specifically, 80% of all victims of homicidal violence are male youth and adults. In parts of Latin America and the Caribbean, homicide is the leading cause of death for young people aged 18-24. Women and girls likewise experience femicide and other forms of sexual and gender-based violence. Indeed, one third of all women experience physical, sexual and psychological abuse. Young children between 0 and 14,

especially those living in violent cities and neighborhoods, are also highly vulnerable. Strategies to prevent and reduce homicide and other forms of violent crime are often comprehensive, combine community policing with environmental design and targeted socio-economic programming. Strategies that are both

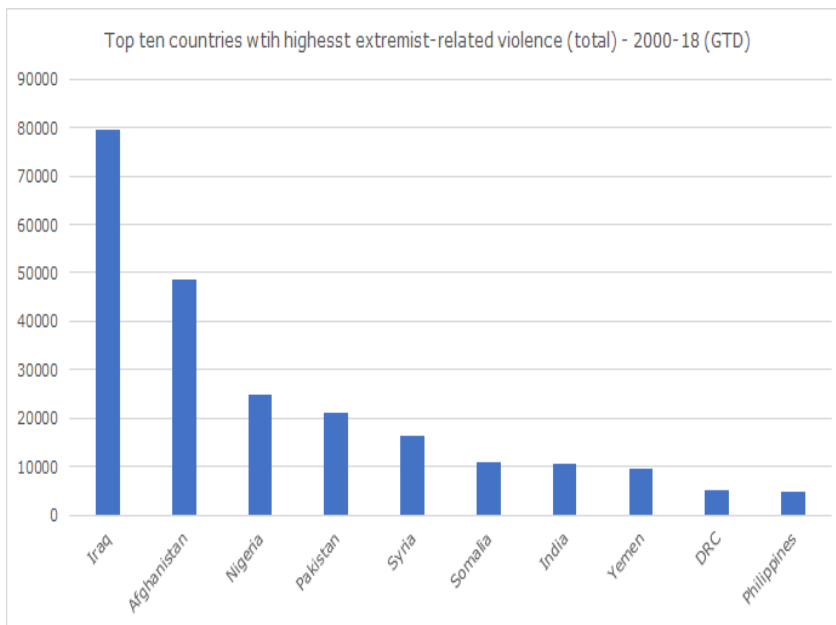
place- and people-based, including those emphasizing early childhood development, work with at-risk youth, and focused deterrence deliver positive outcomes.

### Violent extremism

Violent extremism has risen to the top of the international agenda since September 2001. The frequency and intensity of terrorist incidents has actually declined since its peak in 2014. There were roughly 17,000 terrorist-related deaths and at least three times as many incidents in 2018. Recent trends in extremist violence have followed four waves over the past two decades, with incidents increasing dramatically between 2002-2007, declining from 2008-2011, rising again in dramatic fashion between 2011-2014, and then falling again after shifts in wars in Iraq and Syria.



The majority of these events involve non-state actors who are motivated by extremist religious ideologies and target civilians. There is also a rise in extremist violence involving white supremacists, especially in North America and Europe.



Violent extremist events are widely distributed, though most incidents are concentrated in just a small number of countries. Specifically, over two thirds of all reported events in recent years occurred in Asia and less than a third in Africa. In fact, just four countries—Afghanistan, Iraq, Nigeria, and Syria—accounted for over two thirds of all reported fatalities. If DRC, Mali, Pakistan, the Philippines, Somalia, and Yemen are added to the list, this expands to over nine tenths of all reported terrorist-related deaths. Just four groups—al-Qaeda, al-Shabaab, Boko Haram,

and the Islamic State—of 200 listed terrorist groups are responsible for the vast majority of lethal extremist incidents. This explains why the weakening of the Islamic State’s footprint in Iraq and Syria resulted in sharp declines since 2017, in particular.

## Interpersonal Violence

Interpersonal violence, in particular violence against women and girls and violence against children, continues to plague each corner of the world. Due to their 'hidden' nature, often occurring in homes and 'behind closed doors,' designing appropriate policy interventions has proven challenging.

Violence against women and girls, in particular, is widespread and constitutes a major public health and human rights challenge. An estimated 87,000 women were intentionally killed in 2017. More than half of whom were murdered by intimate partners or family members.<sup>7</sup> An estimated 35 percent of all women worldwide report either physical or sexual violence by a partner or non-partner at some point in their lives. In some countries, the proportion rises above 70 percent. The prevalence of estimates of intimate partner violence varies from over 23 percent in high-income countries to over 37 percent in the Eastern Mediterranean region and Southeast Asia.<sup>8</sup> Adult women and girls make up three out of four human trafficking victims. Additional forms of violence include forced marriage (before the age of 18), rape, female genital mutilation, and multiple forms of bullying. Such violence can negatively affect women and girls' physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health.

The perpetrators of violence against women and girls have several common characteristics. For example, they tend to have a low education, a history of child maltreatment, prior exposure to domestic violence, harmful use of alcohol, a sense of entitlement over women, and may live in environments with unequal gender norms, including a high tolerance for the use of violence. In some contexts, the presence of guns in the homes of perpetrators also drastically increases the likelihood of domestic violence, in particular violence against women.<sup>9</sup> Meanwhile, victims and survivors tend to be more exposed to intimate partner violence when they have low education, exposure to mothers abused by a partner, experience of victimization in childhood, and are living in settings where there is a high acceptance of violence, male privilege, and inferior status for women and girls.

More positively, there is a growing evidence base for what works to prevent and reduce violence against women and girls. For example, relationship-level interventions, micro-finance programs, group education and community outreach to change norms (especially targeting men and boys), and parenting programs all stand out.<sup>10</sup> What is more, advocacy and empowerment counselling interventions, as well as home visitation, show some promise in reducing intimate partner violence against women.

Violence against children, in the form of emotional, physical or sexual abuse, affects one billion children globally, according to WHO.<sup>11</sup> The impact of violence is gendered, and girls are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, rape, child or early/forced marriage, trafficking, and genital mutilation.<sup>12</sup> The level of trauma and the permanent consequences violence has on the lives of children are yet to be fully measured. Reporting on the problem and the data collected also fail to capture the magnitude of the problem, as do the attitudes that normalize violence against children and don't see it as a problem requiring attention.

Similarly to positive trends in fighting violence against women, there are also successful mobilizations and growing evidence about responses that work to keep children safe. They include policy and legal interventions to ban violent punishment, criminalize sexual abuse, and limit youth access to firearms. In addition, they also encompass efforts to change societal norms and values around violence, create safe environments in homes, schools, and increasingly online, expand response and support services such as counseling, and investments in economic empowerment and education.<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the focus on violence against women, girls and children more broadly, there is an increasing recognition that violence against persons based on their real or perceived gender identity and sexual orientation is also becoming a more widely acknowledged problem. Beyond everyday discrimination,



individuals belonging to the LGBTQ community face hate-motivated violence that is brutal and at times sanctioned by law.<sup>14</sup>

### Mass atrocities

Mass atrocities include instances of large-scale and systematic violence against populations. It can include genocide<sup>15</sup>, crimes against humanity<sup>16</sup>, mass killings<sup>17</sup>, war crimes<sup>18</sup>, and ethnic cleansing. Research groups have identified over 200 incidents of “targeted mass killing” between 1946 and 2017.<sup>19</sup> While still comparatively rare events, human rights groups have also identified a distributing increase in the incidence of atrocities, particularly in Syria, Myanmar, China, Yemen, and other countries where such crimes have been documented.<sup>20</sup> Risk modelers have also detected increasing risks in some countries, especially Afghanistan, Yemen, Pakistan, South Sudan, DRC, Egypt, Sudan, Somalia, Cameroon and Ethiopia.<sup>21</sup>

The primary laws that define mass atrocity crimes are the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the 1949 Geneva Conventions and the 1977 Additional Protocols and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Likewise, the “Responsibility to Protect” concept, unanimously adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2005, has also been invoked to prevent and stop genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing.



## What works

Violence is part of everyday life for a significant proportion of the world's people. Countries and cities are not on track to deliver their commitment to significantly reduce all forms of violence by 2030. While gaining attention, SDG16 continues to be among the most neglected of the SDGs. Just 3 of 1,500 private funds associated with the SDGs are concerned with SDG16. Even so, there is ample evidence of successful measures to prevent and reduce different types of violence. A growing body of evidence demonstrates that—with the right policies, programs, and financing—violence can be prevented.<sup>22</sup>

The UN and World Bank have identified several strategies that help reduce conflict intensity and recurrence. Although conflicts have surged in recent years, the number of people killed has declined progressively over the last two decades. The number of deaths from civil wars declined by a factor of four since 1990.<sup>23</sup> While the absence of conflict does not often make headlines, owing to a combination of peace support operations and peacebuilding, many countries have successfully managed to avoid high-risk conflict and a descent into violence.

What is more, there are signs that homicides have fallen in most parts of the world. Homicides in Western European countries have fallen by a factor of thirty over the past 500 years.<sup>24</sup> Over 25 more countries also saw dramatic declines in homicidal violence over the last few decades from Colombia to the United States.<sup>25</sup> Large numbers of cities have also experienced remarkable declines in homicide. Medellín, Colombia once the world's most violent city, experienced a decline in homicide from 380 per 100,000 in 2000 to just 21 per 100,000 today.<sup>26</sup> São Paulo, once one of Brazil's more violent cities, experienced a fall from about 52 per 100,000 in 1999 to just 6.1 per 100,000 today.<sup>27</sup> A focus on hot spots and high risk individuals seems to play an important role.<sup>28</sup>

Although women still feel only marginally safer in their neighborhoods today as compared to a century ago, some countries have achieved steep improvements in perceptions of safety.<sup>29</sup> Attitudinal changes have also been achieved, which also serve as a positive indicator of the development of social and cultural norms that can protect women.<sup>30</sup> More than four in five countries with comparable data have seen a reduction in the proportion of men and women who believe wife-beating is acceptable.<sup>31</sup>

Finally, some countries have achieved rapid reductions in violence against children. In the United States, for example, substantiated cases of child sexual and physical abuse fell by more than a half in 20 years, while cases of neglect fell by 14%.<sup>32</sup> In Sweden, the physical punishment of children has fallen from over 90%<sup>33</sup> in the 1960s to 3% in 2011.<sup>34</sup> Global declines in certain forms of child abuse are also evident. During the Millennium Development Goals era, the early or forced marriage of girls fell from 31% to 26%,<sup>35</sup> and rates of female genital mutilation fell from 46% to 37%.<sup>36</sup>

While positive improvements are evident, now is not the time for complacency; COVID-19 and its disruptions threaten these hard-won gains. Indeed, these and other examples of violence reduction should encourage decision-makers to challenge the fatalism that is often one of the most important impediments to effective prevention. Countries, cities and communities *can* rapidly accelerate reductions in violence if they ground strategies in the best available evidence and learn from pioneers from around the world. The following section provides a short summary of the scientific literature of [what works](#) to prevent and reduce violence.

## Prevent Conflict and Armed Violence

There are wide-ranging experiences in preventing and reducing conflict and related violence around the world. Notwithstanding enormous investment in conflict prevention, peace support and peacebuilding globally, there is surprisingly limited hard evidence of what works, and what does not. The sheer complexity of conflict settings, the range of actors and interests involved, and the dangerous and data scarce environments that accompany them frustrate detailed study. Most evidence is of a qualitative nature. An overarching lesson is that conflict prevention requires long-term and ongoing investment – it cannot be done “on the cheap”. While quick wins are important, sustained engagement is critical, as is engagement with sensitive power dynamics.

**Promote macro-economic stability:** Many conflicts are triggered by macroeconomic shocks, the fall in tax revenue, and the price of goods and services. If governments cannot effectively communicate or manage public expectations, disillusionment can quickly escalate into protest. Similarly, if social safety nets are not in place, this can create rising grievances that can run out of control.

**Strengthen democratic participation:** It is possible to allay and manage grievances when there are channels to communicate them. Increasing the participation of civic groups can also help promote accountability and improve overall state-citizen relationships. It is especially important that such mechanisms are inclusive and facilitate engagement from vulnerable and excluded groups.

**Expand and enhance gender equality:** There is a very strong relationship between gender disparities (in relation to income, employment and violence) and the decision of leaders to use force in international and domestic arenas. Gender equality can also help reduce the likely severity of violence, the prevalence of human rights abuses, and the tendency to diverge from international norms and treaties.

**Promote more peaceful narratives and behaviors:** Investment in peace education, training and inter- and intra-communal dialogue can help shape shared norms and rules to sanction/avoid violence. In some cases, programs through conventional and social media can also affect attitudes, including strengthening incentives for peace.

**Ensuring fair and high-quality service delivery:** Services should not be seen to favor one group or another. Moreover, corruption in service delivery can fuel local grievances. Ensuring universal access to basic services, introducing transparency on service providers, and allowing redress for poor service are all factors that can shape conditions for non-violence.

**Support early warning systems:** There are a host of early warning platforms that can be part of a government or non-government platform. Evaluations suggest that early warning systems are most effective when connected to networks of local prevention and information sharing. Strategies linked to community leaders and civil society groups on the ground may be especially valued since they can help prevent conflict onset.

**Fostering mediation across fractured groups:** The creation of permanent national and subnational mediation and negotiation systems is critical to prevention. These services can be “twinned” with early warning. Rapid deployment of mediation and communication between formalized representative councils, public authorities, private actors, and others can be effective.

**Promoting inclusive dialogue for peace processes:** Creating platforms for a wide range of actors (and managing, rather than excluding, spoilers) is critical. The use of “impartial” and “neutral” third parties to facilitate communication is also important, since the most lasting peace agreements are those that are homegrown.

**Fostering power sharing:** A range of multi-sector reforms will be important to manage grievances and interests among elites and brokers. These changes may be required to be enshrined in constitutional or foundational legal documents. More fundamentally, reforms may be required related to the devolution of government functions and budgets, as well as in relation to control over/management of land and natural resources.

**Engage in security sector/system reform:** The reforming and rebuilding of security systems—including police, judiciary, penal system, and armed forces—and the promotion of accountable and transparent oversight are all critical. Disarmament, demobilization, reinsertion and reintegration, as well as community violence reduction measures, may be advisable.

## Reduce Urban and Criminal Violence

There is a large and growing body of experience with reducing urban and criminal violence around the world. Successful experiences around smarter policing, environmental design, and social and economic programs are often reasonably well-documented, scientific evaluations are frequently conducted, and technical skills are expanding and being shared. While not always adopted, governments, police, social service providers, and a host of organizations have developed expertise in targeting hot spots and disrupting the underlying determinants of violence.

**Hot spot policing:** Hot spot policing (also described as enforcement-based, problem-oriented policing) identifies locations where crime is most prevalent and introduce law enforcement as a deterrent. It is associated with empirically robust crime control gains (from violent offences to other forms of disorder) and when conducted appropriately is not associated with displacement or diffusion effects.

**Focused deterrence:** Focused deterrence seeks to change offender behavior through a blended strategy of law enforcement, community mobilization, and social service action. Increased contact with police, probation officers, and social workers are all proven to have a strong positive impact on reducing gun violence.

**Alternate sentencing/restorative justice:** Incarceration has a mixed effect on crime and virtually no effect on reoffending. Strategies that move away from mandatory sentencing and encourage alternate and evidence-based sentencing to incarceration for non-violent and first-time offenders can improve public safety and save tax-payer dollars. Interventions emphasizing education/vocational programs, in/out prison substance-abuse treatment, and restorative justice measures (e.g. APAC) are highly effective.

**Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) and life skills development:** CBT and modified therapeutic communities can achieve some modest reductions in delinquent behavior, sexual offences and general recidivism. Common programs include aggression replacement training, reasoning and rehabilitation and relapse prevention therapy – all of which have been rigorously evaluated using randomized controlled trials (RCTs). A focus on juveniles and young offenders is critical.

**Early childhood interventions:** Strategies focusing on risk reduction early in life (before law-breaking behavior begins) can reduce criminal conduct later in life. Nurse visitations, preschool programs, parenting skills development, child social skills training, school-based programs, and community-based mentoring activities and reducing school evasion, are all strongly associated with crime prevention with strong cost-benefits.

**Targeted alcohol regulations:** Regulating access to alcohol—including through taxes, price controls and restricting access in hot spots—is associated with crime reduction. This is because a large proportion of homicide perpetrators/victims (up to 50%) are associated with alcohol consumption. Public policies to affect

the price of beverages can reduce related injury rates. A combination of bans on sales to minors and restrictions on opening hours are especially effective.

**Crime prevention through environmental design:** Changes to the built environment can have crime prevention effects. Investments in defensible space such as street closures, barricades, and natural surveillance in crime hot spots have prevention effects. There is less evidence to support private security measures. Street lights in particular lead to increased surveillance of potential offenders, signal community investment, and strengthen social efficacy.<sup>37</sup>

**Security-related technologies:** The use of surveillance cameras—including closed-circuit television (CCTV)—can have a positive impact on reducing property and personal crime in public and private spaces.<sup>38</sup> Body cameras worn by law enforcement officers can also potentially reduce excessive use of force by police and false complaints by citizens.<sup>39</sup> Such technologies need to be introduced with attention to issues of police and citizen protections, data privacy, and opportunities for redress in the event of manipulation or abuse.

## Prevent violent extremism

There is comparatively limited evidence of what works to prevent and reduce violence extremism (“preventing violent extremism”, PVE and “countering violence extremism”, CVE). While there are few large-scale or detailed evaluations from which to generalize, there are, however, a range of emerging practices that draw from several disciplinary traditions. It is worth stressing that PVE emerged from the peacebuilding arena, as opposed to CVE which is linked to wider counter-terrorism measures. Both PVE and CVE strategies are nevertheless merging. The emphasis is on addressing push factors (e.g. a sense of injustice, experience of trauma, grievance with governance, and limited upward mobility) and pull factors (e.g. a chance to avenge past harm, achieve more mobility, or achieve a sense of belonging).

**Avoid and limit repressive security measures:** Repressive policing and security can isolate moderate voices and drive people to seek protection and redress. Enforcing norms to use excessive force, ensuring police, military, and penal authorities are operating in line with international norms and standards, and engaging in citizen oversight can generate positive returns.

**Strengthen social and economic inclusion for at-risk groups:** Strategies targeting at-risk groups to manage expectations, build basic life and income-earning skills, enhance their access to meaningful economic opportunity, and other related activities are believed to be effective.

**Support opening up more space for civil society engagement:** Increasing civic space through legislative reforms to protect legitimate dissent and political expression is important. Likewise, initiatives that purposefully include diverse voices in policy-making decisions, and capacity building for political actors to better engage with constituents non-violently, are other strategies.

**Foster public dialogue to promote tolerance and non-violence:** Identify and support credible intermediaries, such as religious leaders or community spokespersons to conduct outreach and engage in critical dialogue on norms and values. Intra-faith and inter-faith dialogue about common religious values such as generosity and tolerance can be helpful. Women also have a key role to play as mediators and facilitators. Targeted media programs can also be important in curbing hate speech, amplifying diverse voices, and avoiding the sensationalization of violence.

## End Interpersonal Violence

There are also a growing array of strategies to prevent and reduce intimidation, harassment, rape, and other forms of sexual violence. UN Women and its partners have summarized these strategies in a framework called RESPECT. These require building political commitment at the national level – including among political leaders, civil servants, the business community, and civil society more widely. They also require strengthening and investing in local organizations. Likewise, advances are required in laws, policies, and institutions to promote gender equality and safety for women and children.

In addition, there is also an integrated collection of strategic interventions that prevent and reduce violence against children focusing at the individual, household, community, and societal levels. Using a comprehensive body of evidence, a coalition of global institutions including WHO, UNICEF, and the World Bank have identified seven core strategies with a positive track-record. These strategies, collectively known by the acronym INSPIRE, offer a critical list of measures that contribute to sustained reductions in violence.

**Relationship skills strengthened:** Women and girls are provided support in interpersonal communication and conflict management. There is also investment in creating more platforms for shared decision-making in the household, particularly with spouses or partners. Such skills can help endow women and men with more confidence, skills, and experience to disrupt violence before it occurs.

**Empowerment of women:** A wide range of political, economic, and social strategies to strengthen the role of women in their neighborhoods, cities, and countries. These can help women build self-esteem and confidence, together with skills in self-efficacy, assertiveness, and negotiation.

**Services that protect women:** Strategies that strengthen the safety and security of women in the workplace, in public, and at home are critical. This requires developing and resourcing specialized services for women in the police, health, social, and legal services, as well as specialized units to support survivors of violence and abuse.

**Poverty and inequality reduced:** Targeted measures to reduce the poverty experienced by women and girls—including cash-transfer, micro-enterprise, and land tenure initiatives—can all help to strengthen the role of women in the household.

**Environment made more safe and secure:** A priority is to create and support safe spaces for women in the workplace, in public, at schools, in parks and public latrines, and other areas where violence can concentrate. This can involve a combination of social engineering and technology solutions as well.

**Child and adolescent abuse prevented:** A key criteria for protecting women is by eliminating the maltreatment and abuse of children. Interventions that help establish and sustain nurturing family relationships are critical.

**Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms:** There is an urgent need to shift societal and cultural prejudices that sanction any form of violence against women. Dismantling ineffective laws and policies, and changing beliefs and attitudes, is a priority.

**Implementation and enforcement of child protection legislation:** Especially important are laws that ban violent punishment of children by parents, caregivers, teachers and other adults, along with laws criminalizing perpetrators of sexual abuse and exploitation of children. As in the case of violent crime prevention, laws that prevent alcohol misuse and youth access to firearms (and other weapons) have been proven to decrease violence.

**Norms and values that favor child protection and development:** A critical entry-point involves changing harmful social norms that condone violence against children. Interventions can target by gender, ability,

education, age or other categories. Where possible, community engagement and mobilization is critical, as are strategies that promote social cohesion and “bystander intervention”.

**Safe environments and spaces for children:** Key to reducing violence is promoting safe and secure public and private spaces. Strategies that ensure schools, parks, and public buildings are “gun free” or considered sanctuary are key. Specific strategies to limit exposure of young people to violent hot spots are also essential.

**Parent and caregiver support:** There are a wide range of ways to strengthen parents and caregivers who are critical agents in disrupting violence in the home, on the street and across generations. This can involve creches and childcare, home visits, group activities in community settings, and targeted strategies to promote responsible parenting.

**Income and economic strengthening:** Key to reducing violence is improving the financial status of parents and caregivers. This can be achieved through conditional cash transfers, group savings, and loans programs combined with gender equity and parenting programs, micro-financing initiatives and gender norm training.

**Responses and support services:** There are several empirically-tested intervention programs that can help people at risk of perpetrating or being victimized to reduce violence. Counselling and therapeutic programs, screening combined with interventions, drug and alcohol treatment for juvenile offenders in the criminal justice system, as well as foster care and social welfare measures are all strongly associated with reductions in violence against children.

**Education and life-skills:** There are a host of measures focusing on children in school that are correlated with the diminishment of violence. Increasing enrolment in preschools, primary schools and secondary schools that foster a safe and enabling environment is essential. Knowledge transfer about violence, sexual exploitation, and life-skills training are all credited with improving child safety and security.

## Prevent mass atrocities

The evidentiary record for preventing and reducing gross violations of human rights, war crimes and mass atrocities is not as developed as other areas. Part of the challenge is that such events are comparatively rare. Even so, there is broad agreement that monitoring risks that give rise to these types of violence is essential, together with building local resilience to prevent them from occurring. Strengthening the role of both national governments and international actors is crucial to identifying threats, facilitating rapid action, and building local capacities to de-escalate. Since such events are common in contexts involving armed conflict, where state institutions are weak, where police and military forces operate with impunity, such environments are especially important to monitor.<sup>40</sup>

**Strengthen national strategies to prevent mass atrocities and human rights violations:** Adoption, ratification, and codification of comprehensive legislation and customary laws to enforce the rule of law and human rights protections are critical. To ensure such rules are implemented and enforced, capacity strengthening is required for more efficient, legitimate and accountable institutions. While states have primary responsibility to prevent such violence, non-state actors should also be educated and trained in relevant norms and principles.

**Enhance the capacity of national and local institutions to prevent mass atrocities and human rights violations:** The creation of relevant commissions and committees composed of a plural representation of government and civil society is important to undertake risk assessments, manage early warning systems (including community-based systems), undertake training programs, develop recommendations, and

undertake communications is essential. It is critical that parliamentarians and other elected officials are involved and supply the necessary resources.

**Ensure training of the security and justice sectors in the prevention of mass atrocities and human rights violations:** Training in the appropriate use of force, fair and balanced prosecutorial systems, accountable and humane detention services and personnel are all key. So too are independent and adequately resourced national and subnational mechanisms to track conditions in prisons.<sup>41</sup>

**Promote plural and diverse civil society:** Investment in a strong and diverse civil society and free and independent media is critical for promoting tolerance and pluralism. Civil society groups can document abuses in at-risk areas, facilitate data aggregation across a wide network of actors, circulate and communicate information to relevant state and non-state institutions, and enhance awareness about due process, laws and rights. Media groups that track hate and extremist speech are crucial in this regard.

**Advocate for international instruments that prevent atrocities and human rights abuses:** Large numbers of governments have adopted international norms and translated them into national mechanisms to prevent mass atrocities. Ombudsmen, Commissions and Committees exist in Costa Rica, Ecuador, Kenya, Paraguay, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, the US, and elsewhere. The Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect also has networks in over 60 countries and the EU to stimulate the creation of such systems.

**Establish systems of historical memory and transitional justice:** In countries that have experienced mass atrocities and widespread human rights violations, systems of redress for victims, commissions to verify historical incidents, processes to promote accountability, and other strategies to rebuild civic cohesion and trust are important.

**Build mechanisms to end torture in all its forms:** To reduce the likelihood of state repression and abuse of civil liberties from escalating, strategies are needed to prevent torture in all circumstances. This requires establishing safeguards against the deprivation of liberties, eliminating all forms of unofficial detention, moving away from confession-based systems, and ensuring regular reviews of law enforcement and military culture and practice, including independent monitoring.



## Cross-Cutting Threat Reducer: Disarmament and arms regulation

A transversal factor shaping violence and its reduction is the availability and misuse of weapons, particularly small arms, light weapons, and ammunition. Firearms prevalence increases the lethality of crime. In the aggregate, stronger firearm-related legislation and policies are correlated with decreased rates of firearms homicide. Greater access to firearms is correlated with more armed violence – whether measured in terms of homicide, suicide, rape and unintentional injuries. Moreover, the ownership or carrying of guns is not correlated with the inhibition of crime. There are no protective effects of looser gun legislation.<sup>42</sup>

By contrast, the simultaneous application of multiple regulatory measures—not a single intervention—can reduce firearm-related homicide, suicide, and unintentional injuries. Laws restricting purchase (e.g. background checks) and access (e.g. safe storage) are associated with lower rates of intimate partner homicide and unintentional deaths of children. It is not possible to “prove” gun laws reduce all forms of violence – but there are strong indications of a positive association.

Specifically, strengthened background checks, mandatory waiting periods, and permit-to-purchase of firearms and ammunition have strong effects. The available research suggests that they decrease firearm homicide and suicide rates (especially for older people). Laws that promote gun carrying (“shall carry” and “stand your ground”) or allow possession of weapons in public spaces have mixed effects. They either had no effect on gun deaths or they increased firearm homicide and victimization.<sup>43</sup>



There are more mixed outcomes with respect to firearm buyback, gun collection, and amnesty programs. Indeed, the impact of firearm buy-backs and amnesties is mixed. They are not often associated with strong reductions in homicide. Even so, they appear to have demonstrated some statistically significant effects in terms of reducing gun deaths in some settings such as Australia, Austria, and South Africa. Likewise, laws that focus on child safety or ban military-style assault rifles have no proven scientific effect.<sup>44</sup>

Among the disarmament community, there is also a growing recognition that gender shapes the causes and consequences of gun violence and thus gender sensitive approaches to arms control must be frontloaded. Specifically, by engaging more women in the disarmament efforts and policymaking, collecting gender-disaggregated data on armed violence, and investing in gender-proofing of national legislation and policies related to violence prevention and reduction to respond to the different risks that men, women, girls, and boys face from weapons.

Internationally, better control and constraints on the legal trade of conventional arms and ammunition—as well their diversion, illicit transfer, accumulation, and misuse—may help curtail the preponderance and intensity of conflict and violence. Normative breakthroughs in areas such as prohibiting the use of explosive weapons in populated areas and greater international controls on ammunition may have similar positive effects.



# A summary of what works to prevent and reduce violence

 <b>Conflict Prevention</b>	 <b>Criminal violence reduction</b>	 <b>Preventing HR abuses/mass atrocities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Promote macro-economic stability</li> <li>✓ Strengthen democratic participation</li> <li>✓ Expand and enhance gender equality</li> <li>✓ Promote more peaceful narratives and behaviors</li> <li>✓ Ensuring fair and high-quality service delivery</li> <li>✓ Support early-warning systems</li> <li>✓ Fostering mediation across fractured groups</li> <li>✓ Promoting inclusive dialogue for peace processes</li> <li>✓ Fostering power-sharing</li> <li>✓ Engage in security sector/system reform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Hot spot policing</li> <li>✓ Focused deterrence</li> <li>✓ Alternate sentencing/restorative justice</li> <li>✓ Cognitive behavioral therapy and life skills development</li> <li>✓ Early childhood interventions</li> <li>✓ Targeted alcohol regulations</li> <li>✓ Crime prevention through environmental design</li> <li>✓ Security-related technologies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Strengthen national strategies</li> <li>✓ Enhance the capacity of national and local institutions</li> <li>✓ Promote plural and diverse civil society</li> <li>✓ Training of security and justice sectors</li> <li>✓ Promote plural and diverse civil society</li> <li>✓ Advocate for international instruments</li> <li>✓ Historical memory and transitional justice</li> <li>✓ Build mechanisms to end all forms of torture</li> </ul>
 <b>Ending interpersonal violence</b>		 <b>Preventing violent extremism</b>
<p><b>Violence against women/girls</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Relationship skills strengthened</li> <li>✓ Empowerment of women</li> <li>✓ Services that protect women</li> <li>✓ Poverty and inequality reduced</li> <li>✓ Environment made more safe and secure</li> <li>✓ Child and adolescent abuse prevented</li> <li>✓ Transformed attitudes, beliefs and norms</li> </ul>	<p><b>Violence against children</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Implementation and enforcement of child protection legislation</li> <li>✓ Norms and values that favor child protection and development</li> <li>✓ Safe environments and spaces for children</li> <li>✓ Parent and care giver support</li> <li>✓ Income and economic strengthening</li> <li>✓ Responses and support services</li> <li>✓ Education and life-skills</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Avoid and limit repressive security measures</li> <li>✓ Strengthen social and economic inclusion</li> <li>✓ Support opening of civic space</li> <li>✓ Foster dialogue and promote tolerance with intermediaries</li> </ul>

## Principles and Strategy

Although all the forms of violence are different, they share common drivers. Specifically, many forms of violence are perpetrated by young males that face various forms of deprivation. What is more, many extreme forms of organized violence occur in settings that are fragile, where states are alternately absent, exclusionary and repressive. Finally, many forms of violence are motivated by real and perceived marginalization and inequality - including income, wealth, gender and ethnic exclusion. Strategies that focus on deconcentrating inequality and restoring social equality are critical.

While varying from place to place, violence prevention and reduction efforts also share commonalities. As noted above, efforts that address risk factors across an entire life cycle (from early childhood to adolescence and adulthood), that build and consolidate state capacity and legitimacy, that restore and renew social cohesion and community resilience, that promote changing prevailing norms and behaviors, and engage multiple stakeholders in multi-sector, multi-agency, and integrated interventions stand a higher chance of success. While preventing and reducing violence is a long game, quick wins and an ability to demonstrate major shifts in violence reduction in challenging environments are critical to build confidence and scale effective experiences.

Halving violence by 2030 will require a consensus on the movement's foundations, actions and organizing principles. Foundations refers to assembling adequate knowledge, compelling leadership, and diverse and representative voices to shape a movement. The actions include specific measures focused on saving lives in the worst affected areas and those experiencing renewed upticks in violence and instability, building peaceful societies to prevent violence from escalating, and reducing to external stresses that can spur insecurity, and anticipating emerging threats, including climate change and digitally-enabled influencers. Finally, there are several organizing principles including a commitment to reducing violence and addressing its causes, fostering strategic partnerships, and ensuring adequate financing that are required so that the movement to halve violence is effective.



## Foundations

### **Knowledge**

Preventing violence starts with an understanding of the nature, distribution, and drivers of violence and of what works to prevent violence and build more peaceful societies

### **Leadership**

Leaders at all levels must take responsibility for achieving significant, sustained, and measurable reductions in violence

### **Voice**

Survivors, family members of victims, and the worst-affected communities need a platform to bring violence out of the shadow and to help shape prevention strategies



## Actions

### **Save Lives**

Urgent action is needed to rapidly reduce the number of violent deaths, providing space for the worst affected countries and communities to shift towards more resilient and sustainable patterns of development.

### **Build Peaceful Societies**

Breaking cycles of violence requires a sustained effort to strengthen legal frameworks, confront the norms and behaviors that lead to high levels of violence against women and against children, and promote political, social, and economic inclusion of people and communities affected by violence.

### **Reduce External Stresses**

As violence is increasingly driven by global forces, more effective international, and regional cooperation is needed to reduce transnational threats to peace.

### **Respond to New and Emerging Threats**

Violence and conflict being transformed by technology, demographic factors, and climate and environmental change. Halving violence requires acting early to prevent new conflicts and an agile response to new and emerging threats, and increased investment in innovation.



## Organization

### **Partnerships for Prevention**

Violence prevention requires partnerships between the justice, health, education, social protection, and other sectors, between governments and non-government actors, and at all levels from the local to the global – and increased trust between communities and the institutions that serve them.

### **Financing Prevention**

Prevention is cost-effective but substantially under-funded. A significant proportion of finance for justice and security is ineffective or counterproductive.

# Foundations

## Knowledge

*Preventing violence starts with an understanding of the nature, distribution, and drivers of violence and of what works to prevent violence and build more peaceful societies*

- Universal surveillance of violent deaths through a well-functioning civil registration and vital statistics system.
- Survey data to understand rates of victimization, levels of fear of violence, and trust in justice institutions – including specialist surveys for women and children.
- Detailed analysis to identify hotspots that suffer the highest levels of violence and to understand the drivers of this violence.
- Investment in evidence of what works for different forms of violence and in countries with different levels of capacity and resources.

## Leadership

*Leaders at all levels must take responsibility for achieving significant, sustained, and measurable reductions in violence*

- National leaders and government set targets for delivering quantified increases in people's safety and are accountable for delivery of these targets.
- Mayors and local leaders commit to leading an effort to halve urban violence – with a focus on the communities worst affected by violence.
- Unequivocal commitments from national and subnational leaders to tackle violence against women, against children, and against communities and groups that are furthest behind.
- Business leaders promote action to create peaceful and just societies, and confronts violence, abuse, and corruption in its business operations and supply chains.

## Voice

*Survivors, family members of victims, and the worst-affected communities need a platform to bring violence out of the shadow and to help shape prevention strategies.*

- Establish legal standards for the rights of survivors of violence to protection, support, representation, restitution, and reconciliation.
- Provide opportunities for victims and survivors groups to campaign against violence and for justice, while strengthening the voice of women, young people, children, and vulnerable groups.
- Rebuild relationships between communities affected by violence and justice institutions, and create opportunities for community leaders to shape prevention strategies.
- Recognize, finance, and protect grassroots justice defenders and local peacebuilders, while expanding space for civil society to confront violence, abuse, and corruption.

# Actions

## Save Lives

*Urgent action is needed to rapidly reduce the number of violent deaths, providing space for the worst affected countries and communities to shift towards more resilient and sustainable patterns of development.*

- Increase investment in mediation and political and peace-keeping operations to potential violence hot spots.
- All cities to develop and implement multi-sectoral strategies to reduce urban violence, focusing on the highest risk people, places, and behaviors, and in partnership with the worst-affected communities.
- Increased international support and financing for cities in low and middle-income countries experiencing the highest levels of lethal violence.
- Intensified action to promote inclusion and tackle grievances in countries with an elevated risk of political insecurity or violent conflict.
- A renewed commitment to prevent the gender-related killing of women and to tackle impunity by effectively investigating all cases of femicide.

## Build Peaceful Societies

*Breaking cycles of violence requires a sustained effort to strengthen legal frameworks, confront the norms and behaviors that lead to high levels of violence against women and against children, and promote political, social, and economic inclusion of people and communities affected by violence.*

- Update and implement laws to prohibit all forms of violence and to effectively control weapons, alcohol, corruption, and other drivers of violence.
- Develop and implement a plan to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against women, drawing on the internationally agreed RESPECT strategies.
- Develop and implement a plan to prevent and respond to all forms of violence against children, drawing on the internationally agreed INSPIRE strategies.
- Tackle the discrimination facing people and communities that are marginalized due to their experience of violence, while investing in inclusive public services and increasing economic opportunities.

## Reduce External Stresses

*As violence is increasingly driven by global forces, more effective international and regional cooperation is needed to reduce transnational threats to peace.*

- Mitigate the humanitarian impact of conventional arms and address the excessive accumulation and illicit trade of these weapons.
- Significantly reduce illicit financial flows, strengthen the recovery and return of stolen assets, and combat transnational organized crime.

- Transform global policies on illegal drugs, building a new consensus behind models that undermine the power of organized crime while safeguarding the health and security of people who use drugs and the communities where they live.
- Tackle forced displacement and the cross-border nature of a growing proportion of the world's violent conflicts.

### Respond to New and Emerging Threats

*Violence and conflict being transformed by technology, demographic factors, and climate and environmental change. Halving violence requires acting early to prevent new conflicts and an agile response to new and emerging threats, and increased investment in innovation.*

- Track risks of violent conflict and human rights abuses, engaging earlier with governments and civil society when risks are increasing.
- Support new and rapidly growing cities to develop along pathways that promote resilience and decrease the risk of violence.
- Combat fake news, and hate speech, abuse, and sexual exploitation on the internet and social media.
- Tackle the climate emergency by fully implementing the Paris Agreement to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, while protecting the poor and vulnerable from climate-related disasters.

# Organization

## Partnerships for Prevention

*Violence prevention requires partnerships between the justice, health, education, social protection, and other sectors, between governments and non-government actors, and at all levels from the local to the global – and increased trust between communities and the institutions that serve them.*

- At national levels and in cities, establish and resource an agency to develop a plan to halve violence and coordinate its implementation across sectors.
- Tackle corruption and abuse by security and justice actors, while rebuilding trust between the police and communities worst affected by violence.
- Unite international and regional organizations, and major global partnerships, behind integrated strategies that tackle multiple forms of violence.

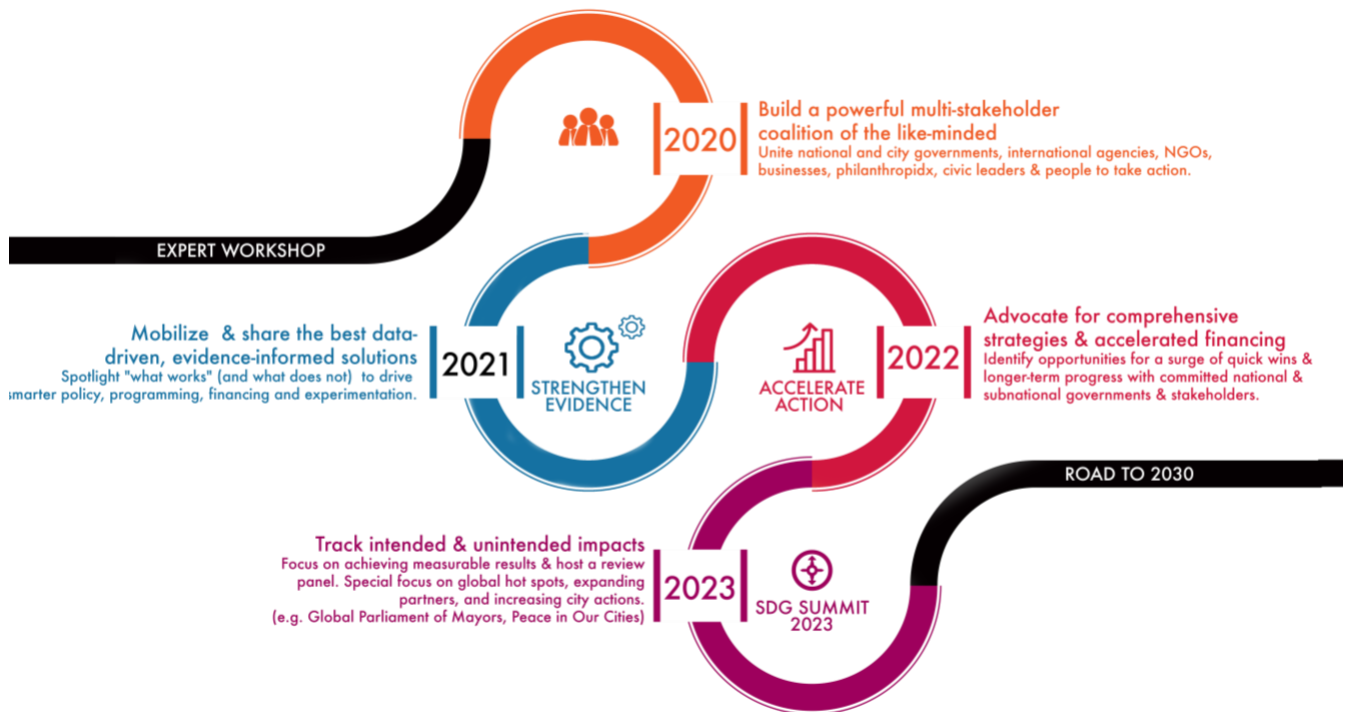
## Financing Prevention

*Prevention is cost-effective but substantially under-funded. A significant proportion of finance for justice and security is ineffective or counterproductive.*

- Strengthen the case for investment in prevention and establish the unit costs of evidence-based programs in countries at different levels of development.
- End mass incarceration, limit pre-trial detention, and reduce reliance on coercive approaches to tackling crime, releasing resources for evidence-informed strategies to prevent violence.
- Double the proportion of development finance spent on conflict prevention and peacebuilding from current levels of 12%.
- Establish a prize to incentivize innovation in halving urban violence and explore other innovative financing mechanisms.

# Next steps

A measurable reduction of violence around the world is feasible and achievable. The movement to halve violence by 2030 is intended to build a coalition of like-minded governments, international organizations, private sector actors, and national and grassroots NGOs between 2020 and 2025, initially. In the short-term, the movement will formulate a shared agenda that, while recognizing differences in individual goals, practices and results, accelerates national and city-level commitments to meaningfully reduce violence in all its forms.



## Short-Term – Commitment to halve violence

The public-facing mobilization of the movement to halve violence will formally launch in September 2020. It will constitute a major contribution to the start of the UN’s Decade of Action on SDGs. The movement will be informed by a meta-review of the scope and scale of violence and a scientific review of the trajectories and costs of violence by 2030. The movement will be directed by several core partners – each of which will activate their respective networks. A shortlist of key partners includes:

- National governments must lead efforts to end violence, but mayors and city networks such as GPM and PiOC have a growing role to play, including a resolution with 10 actions to prevent and reduce violence;
- International organizations – agencies such as WHO, PBSO, UNODC, UNICEF, UNDP, UN Habitat, UN Women and major global partnerships;
- Regional organizations – specific entities such as the OAS and AU, especially in regions that share a disproportionate burden of violence;



- Non-governmental organizations – humanitarian and development organizations involved in community violence prevention, as well as grass-roots mobilizers and think tanks; and
- Business coalitions – private sector businesses, social impact investors, and pension funds committed to achieving SDGs.

Following the launch of the movement, a taskforce will be established to create a ten-year plan of what can be delivered by 2030. The group will also leverage other action plans including the Global Status Report on Preventing Violence against Children, new commitments to implement INSPIRE through the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, and the Beijing+25 action coalition on preventing violence against children.

### Medium-Term – Accelerated action to halve violence

The movement to halve violence will expand its network together with regional and national activities in 2021/2022 and beyond. The goal is to assist members to convert the initial commitments made to deeds. The movement will continue producing strategic communications to broaden membership—especially at city and grassroots levels—and promote support for the goal, particularly in countries and cities that are most affected by violence. Specific actions include:

- Regional plans for halving violence – work with AU and OAS to establish specialized commissions on violence prevention and reduction for member states;
- Support a portfolio of countries to announce targets and plans for halving violence (focusing on diversity of countries with different levels of violence problems);
- Launch plans for accelerating violence reduction action in 50 cities – leveraging the Peace in Our Cities network and the signatories to the Global Parliament of Mayor’s resolution to halve urban violence – with clear targets and plans;
- Develop a strategic plan with the UN system to devolve violence reduction plans to the national level, including in the context of national development plans;
- Accelerate opportunities for financing (including through bilateral, multilateral and private funding, as well as incentive competitions such as the X-Prize);
- Identify new financial instruments for accelerating private investment in violence prevention and reduction, including in partnership with the private sector; and
- Report new commitments at the annual SDG Action Platform and the High-level Political Forum.

### Long-Term – Report on progress at the second SDG Summit

By 2023/2024, the movement to halve violence will work with national and city counterparts to expand violence reduction efforts. On the basis of “paired” partnerships—between two or more states—the Pathfinders will provide technical support to accelerate violence prevention and reduction efforts. Likewise, results will be reported at the annual review of the SDGs at High-Level Political Forum, with a focus on initial outcomes and impacts. Working in partnership with the Pathfinders, the movement will host a review conference to assess results in 2025, including exploring opportunities to adjust goals, metrics, and partnerships.

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# Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Kleinfeld and Muggah (2019), “No War, No Peace: Healing the World’s Violent Societies”.

<https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/10/14/no-war-no-peace-healing-world-s-violent-societies-pub-80034>

<sup>2</sup> See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>

<sup>3</sup> The movement is also informed by SDG 5, and in particular 5.2 which focuses on reducing gender-based violence.

<sup>4</sup> SDG16.1 includes metrics focusing on reducing intentional homicide (per 100,000), conflict-deaths (per 10,000), the percentage of the population affected by physical, psychological and sexual violence, and the perception of safety of the population. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

<sup>5</sup> SDG16.1 also includes metrics emphasising reductions in the proportion of children aged 1-17 experiencing physical punishment and psychological aggression by caregivers, the number of victims of human trafficking by type of exploitation, and the proportion of young women and men aged 18-29 who experience sexual violence by age 18. See <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/sdg16>.

<sup>6</sup> The 2010s saw several examples of mass atrocities occurring, such as in Libya, Côte d’Ivoire, South Sudan, and Kenya.

<sup>7</sup> See United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (2019). Global Study on Homicide 2019, p. 10.

<sup>8</sup> See WHOI (2013) Global and regional estimates of violence against women. Geneva: WHO, <https://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/publications/violence/9789241564625/en/>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/22/us/gun-ownership-violence-statistics.html>

<sup>10</sup> See Fulu, E., Kerr-Wilson, A. and J. Lank (2015) Effectiveness of Interventions to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls: DFID, <https://www.whatworks.co.za/documents/publications/4-effectiveness-of-interventions-to-prevent-violence-against-women-and-girls/file>.

<sup>11</sup> See WHO. Global status report on violence prevention 2014. Geneva: World Health Organization; 2014

<sup>12</sup> See Stoltenborgh MA, van Ijzendoorn MH, Euser E, Bakerman-Kranenburg MJ. A global perspective on child sexual abuse: Meta-analysis of prevalence around the world. *Child Maltreatment*. 2011;16:79–101.

<sup>13</sup> See INSPIRE: Seven Strategies for Ending Violence Against Children, WHO, 2016: <https://www.who.int/publications-detail-redirect/inspire-seven-strategies-for-ending-violence-against-children>

<sup>14</sup> See summary of the UN High-Commissioner’s report to the Human Rights Council on discrimination and violence against individuals based on their sexual orientation and gender identity (May 2015):

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/A\\_HRC\\_29\\_23\\_One\\_pager\\_en.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Discrimination/LGBT/A_HRC_29_23_One_pager_en.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> Genocide is defined as a set of acts undertaken with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group. See 1948 Article 2, UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.

<sup>16</sup> Crimes against humanity are defined as “any of the following acts when committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population.” The acts include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape (and other gender-based or sex crimes), group-based persecution, enforced disappearance, apartheid, and “other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing great suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.” See 1998 Article 7, Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

<sup>17</sup> The deliberate actions of armed groups, including but not limited to state security forces, rebel armies, and other militias, that result in the deaths of at least 1,000 noncombatant civilians targeted as part of a specific group over a period of one year or less.

<sup>18</sup> War crimes are serious violations of international humanitarian law and occur in the state of armed conflict. The Rome Statute lists numerous acts that may constitute war crimes, including attacks on civilians, forcibly recruiting and using child soldiers, and destruction of educational and religious institutions.

<sup>19</sup> See Butcher, C., Goldsmith, B. and S. Nanlohy. (2020) “Introducing the Targeted Mass Killing Dataset for the Study and Forecasting of Mass Atrocities”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0022002719896405>.

<sup>20</sup> See HRW (2019) Atrocities as the New Normal, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2019/country-chapters/global-2>

<sup>21</sup> See [https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Statistical\\_Risk\\_Assessment\\_2019-2020.pdf](https://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/Statistical_Risk_Assessment_2019-2020.pdf).

<sup>22</sup> See, for example, DFID (2020) What Works to Prevent Violence Against Women and Girls. London: DFID, <https://www.whatworks.co.za/news/news/item/696-a-rigorous-global-evidence-review-of-interventions-to-prevent-violence->

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against-women-and-girls-news; Cities United (2020) What Works (and Doesn't) in Violence Prevention, <http://citiesunited.org/what-works-violence/what-works-in-violence-prevention/>; USAID (2018) What Works in Reducing Community Violence, Washington DC: USAID, <https://www.usaid.gov/sites/default/files/USAID-2016-What-Works-in-Reducing-Community-Violence-Final-Report.pdf>, WHO (2020) Violence Prevention, [https://www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention/violence/en/](https://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention/violence/en/), etc.

<sup>23</sup> Pathways +WDR 2011

<sup>24</sup> See <https://www.vrc.crim.cam.ac.uk/system/files/documents/manuel-eisner-historical-trends-in-violence.pdf>.

<sup>25</sup> Or use this: Between 1993 and 2012, 25 of these countries saw a decline in homicide rates, with seven of the countries seeing rates decline by at least 50% and a further nine seeing rates decline by at least 25%. Manuel Eisner, Amy Nivette, Aja Louise Murray and Maria Krisch (2016), 'Achieving population-level violence declines: implications of the international crime drop for prevention programming,' *Journal of Public Health Policy*, no 37, S66-80, available at <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/27638243>

<sup>26</sup> See Muggah, R. (2017) "Where Are the World's Most Fragile Cities", CityLab, 27 November, <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/11/where-are-the-worlds-most-fragile-cities/546782/>

<sup>27</sup> See Muggah, R. (2018) "Violent Crime in Sao Paulo has Dropped Dramatically. Is this Why?", Agenda, 7 May, <https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/03/violent-crime-in-sao-paulo-has-dropped-dramatically-this-may-be-why/>

<sup>28</sup> See Muggah, R., Aguirre, K., and S. Chainey (2017) "Targeting Hot Spots Could Drastically Reduce Latin America's Murder Rate", *Americas Quarterly*, 14 March, <https://www.americasquarterly.org/content/targeting-hot-spots-could-dramatically-reduce-latin-americas-murder-rate>

<sup>29</sup> See <https://data.em2030.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/EM2030BendingTheCurveReportMarch2020-1.pdf>.

<sup>30</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015), *The World's Women 2015 - Trends and Statistics*. New York: United Nations, available at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015\\_report.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2015), *The World's Women 2015 - Trends and Statistics*. New York: United Nations, available at [http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015\\_report.pdf](http://unstats.un.org/unsd/gender/downloads/WorldsWomen2015_report.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> David Steven (2014), *If Not Now, When? Ending Violence Against the World's Children*. New York: Center on International Cooperation, available at [http://www.globaldashboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/If\\_Not\\_Now\\_When\\_Final\\_201014.pdf](http://www.globaldashboard.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/If_Not_Now_When_Final_201014.pdf); see also David Finkelhor, Lisa Jones, Anne Shattuck & Kei Saito (2013) 'Updated Trends in Child Maltreatment, 2012' *Crimes against Children Research Center*, available at [http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV203\\_Updated%20trends%202012\\_Updated\\_2\\_20\\_14.pdf](http://www.unh.edu/ccrc/pdf/CV203_Updated%20trends%202012_Updated_2_20_14.pdf)

<sup>33</sup> Cecilia Modig (2009), *Never Violence - Thirty Years on from Sweden's Abolition of Corporal Punishment*. Stockholm: Government Offices of Sweden and Save the Children Sweden, available at [http://www.government.se/contentassets/6bfb214c582448b6ace4d32978361577/never-violence---thirty-years-on-from-swedens-abolition-of-corporal-punishment\\_p17](http://www.government.se/contentassets/6bfb214c582448b6ace4d32978361577/never-violence---thirty-years-on-from-swedens-abolition-of-corporal-punishment_p17)

<sup>34</sup> Staffan Janson, Carolina Jernbro, and Bodil Långberg (2011), *Corporal punishment and other humiliating behaviour towards children in Sweden – a national study 2011: English summary*. Karlstad: Stiftelsen Allmänna Barnhuset, available at [http://srs.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/consultations/better\\_data/reference%20material/corporal\\_punishment\\_s\\_weden.pdf](http://srs.violenceagainstchildren.org/sites/default/files/consultations/better_data/reference%20material/corporal_punishment_s_weden.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Girls Not Brides (2016), *It Takes a Movement: Reflecting on five years of progress towards ending child marriage*. London: Girls Not Brides, available at <http://www.girlsnotbrides.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/IT-TAKES-A-MOVEMENT-ENG.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> UNICEF Data and Analytics Section (2016), *Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting: A Global Concern*. New York: UNICEF, available at [http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC\\_2016\\_brochure\\_final\\_UNICEF\\_SPREAD.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/media/files/FGMC_2016_brochure_final_UNICEF_SPREAD.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> Meta-reviews from the US and UK suggest a 7-29% decrease in street crime in contrast to comparable controls.

<sup>38</sup> Systematic reviews from the US and UK suggest that CCTV cameras can generate a 16-23% drop in crime (the ranges vary from 6% in city centers/public housing to 51% in the case of car parks).

<sup>39</sup> There is a wide variation in the effects (based on RCTs in dozens of cases) ranging from null effect to a 70-80% drop in both dependent variables.

<sup>40</sup> UNDP, "Framework of Analysis for Atrocity Crimes: A Tool for Prevention".

<sup>41</sup> Association for the Prevention of Torture, "Yes, Torture Prevention Works".

<sup>42</sup> In the US, for example, firearm assaults were almost 7 times more common in those states with the most guns versus those with the least. Another study in the same year found that households with a firearm in the home were more than two times more likely to be murdered as those without (the odds ratios are 41% higher risk of murder and a 244% higher risk of suicide when compared to non gun-owners).

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<sup>43</sup> In the US, for example, a review of stand your ground determined a 6.8% increase in homicide rates and even higher among white males.

<sup>44</sup> One study from University of Pennsylvania in 2004 suggested that assault rifle use dropped by 17-72% in the US following a 1994 ban, but it has not been verified.



# PATHFINDERS

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