Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

At times it seems impossible that the crises we are witnessing today will ever be resolved. The situation in Yemen has devolved into one of the worst humanitarian calamities in recent memory. Increased foreign meddling and absolute impunity in Syria leave one to wonder if peace will ever be within reach. Conflict has flared up in parts of Congo that were spared in the past (Kasai), or that outsiders thought had been pacified (Ituri). We’ve yet to see a breakthrough in South Sudan or Central African Republic, while violence in the Sahel is spiraling. The list goes on. In each conflict, communities are caught in the middle and pay the highest price.

Yet amidst all of these tragedies, I have hope as I listen to civilians in the areas we are serving.

In Iraq last summer, an incredibly brave woman shared with me how she fled ISIS-controlled Mosul. With four children and only a few essentials, she left at night. In Northeast Nigeria, I heard stories from several members of a community and how it rebuilt itself after Boko Haram burned their town and kidnapped family members and neighbors.

These civilians are not giving up – and neither is CIVIC. We continue to work alongside civilians caught in conflicts, listening to their stories, learning their protection needs, and understanding their priorities. We then translate this into actionable policy recommendations for governments, militaries, and international institutions.

Our approach is working.

In 2017, along with the horror of conflict, we saw progress. In Afghanistan, after two years of advocacy by CIVIC and our partners, President Ghani signed a historic national civilian protection policy. In CAR, in response to escalating violence against civilians, CIVIC mobilized a coalition to successfully advocate for an increase in UN peacekeeping troops to stem the violence.

In 2018, we plan to redouble our efforts. In Yemen, we are empowering communities impacted by violence to advocate for their own protection with armed actors. In Mali, our work with the complex web of national, regional, and international forces will ensure those forces are accountable to the communities in which they operate. In Iraq, Ukraine, and Nigeria, we are increasingly engaging national security forces and local communities to ensure better protection.

In Washington, DC, we continue to advocate for the adoption of the highest standards of protection both in US military operations and in security cooperation activities. In New York, we continue to push UN peacekeeping missions to establish better relationships with affected communities and deliver better protection, even as resources become scarcer.

At CIVIC, I am surrounded by an inspired and talented team, including a Board of Directors comprised of the leaders of our field. Everyone has a role to play in achieving our mission – including you.

In 2018, as we continue to learn from civilians in conflict zones, together we will tirelessly work toward better protection and a brighter future they deserve.

Let’s listen.

With gratitude and respect,

Sincerely,

Federico Borello
Executive Director
Center for Civilians in Conflict
RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.
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Where We Work

United States
CIVIC remained a trusted and prominent source on the issue of civilian harm arising from US military operations. For example, in December, having been invited to meet with Secretary of Defense James Mattis, we shared structural and campaign-specific concerns and recommendations to address civilian casualties arising from US military and coalition operations.

United Nations
Our advocacy resulted in high-level recognition by the UN Secretary-General of the importance of civilian protection. In his annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, Secretary-General Guterres called upon all member states and intergovernmental organizations to adopt national policies on the protection of civilians and civilian harm mitigation in his annual report. This was the first ever call by the Secretary-General for the adoption of such policies.

Mali
We reestablished our connections and ongoing presence in Mali, where for nearly a decade, civilians have been displaced and harmed by conflict. We conducted a thorough assessment of the UN peacekeeping operation’s efforts and shared our findings with key stakeholders to protect civilians in the context of a stalled peace agreement and mounting attacks by violent extremists.

Nigeria
Throughout 2017, we continued calling on Nigeria’s Ministry of Defense to refine and adopt its draft policy on civilian protection. CIVIC also conducted lectures and trainings with military education and training institutions throughout the year. In the Northeast, CIVIC continued to engage with members of the 7th Division and community defense forces fighting armed opposition groups, including by conducting workshops on the protection of civilians and civil-military dialogues between community members and security forces.

Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC)
We conducted field research in the DRC to assess how cuts to the UN peacekeeping operation’s budget and troop numbers could impact its ability to protect civilians in a context of growing threats to civilians. CIVIC’s findings and recommendations were synthesized in the report, *Protection with Less Presence*. 

Protection with Less Presence
Iraq
We conducted workshops on civilian protection with Kurdish Peshmerga forces ahead of the Mosul operation and advocated with the anti-ISIS coalition to take steps to reduce civilian harm in urban areas. We are now working with Iraqi Security Forces to build their capacity on civilian protection in the post-ISIS phase.

Syria
In Syria, CIVIC’s advocacy effort deepened as CIVIC produced Recommendations to the Anti-ISIS Coalition on Operations in Syria, which called on the US and coalition forces to include training in civilian harm mitigation for local forces as the operations against ISIS in Raqqa intensified.

Central African Republic (CAR)
Our report, The Primacy of Protection, helped raise the alarm about escalating violence in CAR and the need to strengthen the UN peacekeeping operation. We mobilized a global coalition of NGO partners to urge the Secretary-General and UN Security Council to increase the capabilities of the operation and improve its performance in protecting civilians. Despite mounting pressure to downsize many peacekeeping operations around the globe, 900 additional troops were approved for deployment to the CAR mission.

Afghanistan
In September 2017, following two years of technical support by CIVIC, the Afghan government adopted a landmark national civilian casualty mitigation and prevention policy. We will continue to work closely with the government to implement the policy to reduce civilian harm.

Yemen
Our report We Lived in Hell, published in early 2017, provided civilian perspectives on the complex conflict in Yemen. We also secured funding for a two-year project to build the capacity of Yemeni forces on civilian protection in three governorates on the front line of security operations.

South Sudan
We continued to monitor reforms implemented by the UN to address challenges that contributed to its failure to protect civilians in Juba and Malakal in 2016. We found that the UN Mission in South Sudan is making progress, including in implementing the recommendations highlighted in CIVIC’s prior reports.

Ukraine
CIVIC developed a “Ukraine Protection of Civilians Capabilities Assessment” report and presented it to various integral members of the Ukrainian government, NATO, the EU, and others. The report received high marks and led to the December 2017 launch of an 18-month project aimed at building Ukraine’s capacity to protect civilians caught in the conflict in eastern Ukraine.
How We Work

For nearly fifteen years, Center for Civilians in Conflict (CIVIC) has worked to ensure that the rights of civilians in conflict zones be recognized and respected.
MISSION

Our mission is to work with armed actors and civilians in conflict to develop and implement solutions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to civilian harm.

VISION

Our vision is for a world where parties to armed conflicts recognize the dignity and rights of civilians, prevent civilian harm, protect civilians caught in conflict, and amend harm.

OUR IMPACT IN 2017

- 120% increase in CIVIC staff, to 42 people and growing.
- 12 countries where CIVIC’s staff responded to the needs of civilians in conflict zones, including by opening new offices in 3 additional countries.
- 67% increase in funding to support CIVIC’s impactful work across the globe.
Our Approach

RESEARCH & ANALYSIS
We begin by investigating conditions for civilians on the ground in conflict zones. We listen to civilians in order to learn their perspectives and understand their needs. In our findings, we identify specific gaps in protection and propose concrete solutions. Further, we assess the capacity of the parties to the conflict to implement our recommendations.

ADVOCACY & ENGAGEMENT

Engaging Parties to the Conflict: Once we identify the challenges and suggest practical solutions, we develop a detailed advocacy plan to engage all relevant stakeholders. While we focus on those responsible for the harm, we work with everyone—government officials, armed actors, civilians, civil society groups, and international organizations and coalitions—to secure the outcomes we seek.

Promoting Public Awareness: We also utilize traditional and social media to raise local and international awareness about the plight of civilians in particular conflicts and generate public support for the implementation of our recommendations.

Empowering Civilians: We work with local civil society groups to ensure they have the knowledge and tools they need to press for better policies and practices. We seek out civilian input and integrate their concerns into our recommendations to armed actors.

Recognizing and Addressing the Needs of Groups Facing Additional Risks in Conflict: We recognize that conflict has a disproportionate impact on and creates additional risks for certain populations, including women, children, and the disabled. We work to amplify their voices and include their perspectives in our research, recommendations, and engagement. In line with UN Security Council Resolution 1325, we promote women’s involvement as active participants in protection and as advocates for policy change within communities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Technical Assistance: Once we make recommendations, we roll up our sleeves and work with governments, armed actors, civilians, civil society groups, and international organizations to implement them. We help develop the tools each group needs to ensure sustainable change, including civilian harm tracking cells, post-harm assistance mechanisms, and updated military doctrine and planning guidance. We regularly deploy our in-house experts to support program development and implementation.

Promoting Dialogue: Whenever safe and feasible, we encourage civilians to be their own advocates by engaging directly with civilian and military leaders. We encourage civilians and armed actors to understand each other’s perspectives and identify shared solutions. We organize discussions in neutral settings and conduct empathy trainings that help security actors understand the civilian perspective.

Facilitating Training: We work with governments and multinational coalitions to develop training packages that address particular protection issues. We identify gaps in current training programs, drawing on our research and interviews. We track implementation and conduct post-training assessments to gauge progress and identify further opportunities.

Making Amends: We believe that all parties to a conflict have an ethical obligation to recognize and provide assistance to civilians they harm while conducting combat operations, as well as a legal obligation to provide reparations to civilians when they violate their rights. We educate governments, militaries, peacekeepers, and multinational coalitions on the forms that amends can take, including transparent investigations, apologies, monetary payments, and other offerings in accordance with victims’ needs and preferences.

EVALUATION & LEARNING

Evaluating Results and Identifying Lessons Learned: We track the results of our engagement and actively seek ways to improve. We integrate monitoring, evaluation, and learning into every stage of our work to ensure that the policies we propose are aligned with the needs and priorities of civilians. This approach also helps us better measure the long-term impact and effectiveness of our work and apply any lessons learned to other contexts and conflicts.
Who We Are

Saman Omar,
Program Officer, Iraq

Lee Sutton,
Sr. Advisor, Monitoring & Evaluation

Hadi Marifat,
Sr. Program Officer, Afghanistan

David Azutoru,
Sr. Training Advisor, Nigeria

Jessi Ginther,
Director of Operations

“In Iraq, CIVIC offers workshops that help the Kurdish Peshmerga forces better understand ways to minimize civilian harm, and to protect civilians, their dignity, and property, during military operations.”

“In 2017, CIVIC expanded its monitoring, evaluation, and learning capacity to ensure all projects have more robust feedback mechanisms to gather perspectives from civilians. Civilian-centered input informs CIVIC’s flexible, adaptive approach and ensures that civilian voices are at the heart of CIVIC’s projects.”

“In Afghanistan, we work with the Afghan civil society to strengthen its ability to engage with the government on civilian protection concerns. The group’s knowledge on the subject matter is growing from the capacity-building training CIVIC has offered, and as civilians respond, engage, and advocate protection issues through the media and with the Afghan government.”

“In Nigeria, CIVIC conducts trainings for the Nigerian Military to help guide and advise on minimizing harm against civilians. Additionally, CIVIC holds workshops for civilian self-protection. These workshops allow civilians to directly voice their concerns to their government, and helps to foster trust between local communities and the military.”

“CIVIC is an organization that is able to transform scarce resources into meaningful impact for civilians on the ground. When I saw the opportunity to work directly with this ‘Little Engine that Could,’ I jumped at the chance. It is an organization that seeks outcomes and not just more funds. CIVIC maintains a laser sharp focus on civilians and their well-being and quickly takes action.”

“I began to realize that this little NGO was a hidden gem in a large field of international actors and causes.” —Jessi Ginther
“Everyone comes to talk to us about rights, rights, rights, but we had no idea what this means. We now know we have a right not to have someone demand sex because they are giving me food,”

—a woman at a camp for internally displaced persons in Northeastern Nigeria told CIVIC.
War and armed conflict disproportionately harm civilians. Some civilians may leave their homes and become internally displaced or seek asylum abroad as refugees. For others, the threat of armed actors, the lack of economic resources, and factors such as disease, age, and fear make leaving a conflict zone impossible.

CIVIC believes that the first step to advocating for civilians affected by conflict is to recognize civilians’ inherent rights and dignity. At CIVIC, we believe that civilians are not merely victims of conflict; they are an integral part of creating and implementing methods for conflict resolution. We actively seek to understand the various ways in which conflict affects civilians by listening to their accounts and gathering their perspectives.

Since 2003, CIVIC has educated politicians, governments, and armed actors on how conflict affects civilians. For almost fifteen years, CIVIC has brought the voices of civilians caught in conflict to those in power. When these civilians speak, CIVIC listens.

CIVIC calls on policymakers and armed actors to recognize civilians’ rights, namely by striving to ensure that civilians’ well-being is taken into consideration before, during, and after conflict and publicly acknowledging when civilians have been harmed.
International Humanitarian Law (IHL) imposes numerous legal obligations upon parties to a conflict that are intended to minimize human suffering during hostilities. Under IHL, armed actors have a legal responsibility to take necessary precautions to prevent harming civilians during their operations.

Yet civilians continue to suffer.

Preventing harm first requires leaders of parties to a conflict to investigate and understand how civilians could be harmed, and then to ensure that the armed actors under their guidance are trained in practices to best prevent harm.

CIVIC works with policymakers and armed actors to encourage and facilitate this understanding, and to translate law and lessons learned into applied policies and practices that prevent harm to civilians.

At CIVIC, we not only help armed actors and parties to a conflict implement their legal obligations, we encourage all parties to go beyond the minimum legally required by IHL.
“There is no civilian protection. There are only frontlines, battles, and clashes,”
— a Yemeni man in war-torn Taiz told CIVIC.
While conflict is damaging to all parties involved, the experience can be particularly brutal for civilians. In some cases, armed actors deliberately terrorize, intimidate, exploit, and destroy civilians and communities. Throughout a conflict, governments, government security forces, and international peacekeepers have the responsibility to protect civilians from harm.

CIVIC works with international organizations, like the United Nations (UN) and the African Union (AU), as well as national militaries, to develop the policies and build the skills necessary to protect civilians from those who wish to harm them. Our work is guided by the principle that engaging directly with policymakers and armed actors, and offering them practical solutions backed by expert research to better protect civilians will ultimately increase understanding of the imperative to protect civilians.

At the UN, CIVIC raises awareness of instances of civilian harm in countries in conflict, and identifies steps that the UN and its members should take to address it. CIVIC continuously works to strengthen the protection of civilians through UN peace operations and expand the understanding of good peacekeeping practices. When UN peacekeeping operations fail to protect civilians, CIVIC advocates for accountability and broader reforms to ensure that UN peace operations are better equipped to deliver on their mandates.
The voices of all civilians affected by conflict deserve to be heard.

At CIVIC, we listen.

Even when all possible measures are taken to prevent harm, the nature of conflict is such that some civilians are still likely to be affected. When this occurs, CIVIC maintains that it is unacceptable for those who caused the harm to simply walk away – leaving the families and communities impacted to attempt recovery on their own.

To ensure that harmed civilians are not abandoned, CIVIC advocates for armed actors and peacekeepers to work with the survivors of conflict and offer appropriate amends to those injured and the families of those killed. Such amends may take a range of forms, from verbal apologies to financial assistance.

The practice of amends is increasingly common within the international community. The UN has frequently used CIVIC’s concepts of “making amends” and “civilian harm tracking” in its protection of civilians discussions and documents.

Whatever the form of amends implemented, CIVIC has worked unceasingly for over a decade to ensure that the dignity of victims, and their families, is not only recognized but also respected by all parties to a conflict.
“We ask Congolese civilians how the presence—or absence—of peacekeeping bases impacts their sense of security. We talk with South Sudanese female community leaders living in displaced persons sites under UN protection to learn whether—and how—they share their security concerns with peacekeepers. We bring these opinions and voices into our meetings with UN officials everywhere from Juba and Goma to Washington and New York to ensure that—whether they are drafting a peacekeeping mission’s mandate, documenting human rights violations, or deciding where to launch a patrol—civilian voices are heard.”

LAUREN SPINK, CIVIC’s Peacekeeping Advisor

“"If there was no UN, there would be no one left here," a South Sudanese civilian told CIVIC. In many conflict zones worldwide, UN peacekeepers are the only front-line defense for civilians targeted by armed actors. Driven by the voices of those caught in conflicts, CIVIC researches and advocates for stronger and more effective peacekeeping operations. Of particular focus in 2017 were those deployed in the Central African Republic (CAR), Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Mali, and South Sudan.

CAR In response to a stark escalation of violence against civilians in CAR, CIVIC developed and published The Primacy of Protection: Delivering on the MINUSCA Mandate in the Central African Republic. Our research found that, given the scope of violence and the inability of CAR’s government to protect civilians, it was vital for the international community to strengthen the UN peacekeeping operation in CAR, known by its acronym MINUSCA. Any response must include providing the operation with uniformed personnel who are able and willing to rapidly respond to threats to civilians.

Given the urgency of the situation, CIVIC galvanized like-minded NGOs to join our call to reinforce MINUSCA. CIVIC met with the UN Secretary-General and UN Security Council members to urge them to augment MINUSCA’s capabilities. Despite mounting pressure in 2017 on the UN to downsize peacekeeping operations, our efforts were successful. In November, the UN Security Council approved the deployment of 900 additional troops to increase MINUSCA’s flexibility and mobility.

DRC Insecurity and violence against civilians in the DRC is also on the rise as DRC’s President delays his commitment to hold national elections and step down. Despite the fragile situation on the ground, the UN Security Council reduced the budget and troop levels of the UN peacekeeping operation in the DRC, known by the acronym MONUSCO. In part because of the cuts, MONUSCO expedited plans to decrease its permanent presence in some areas, aiming instead to protect civilians through increased mobile deployments, a model referred to as “protection through projection.”

CIVIC was one of the first NGOs to research and document the impact the operation’s shrinking presence and reduced resources could have on MONUSCO’s ability to protect civilians. We shared our findings and recommendations in the widely-read report Protection with Less Presence: How the Peacekeeping Operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo is Attempting to Deliver Protection with Fewer Resources. The report was well-received by MONUSCO personnel, UN Secretariat leaders, and Member States. UN Security Council members have now required the UN Secretary-General to report on the implementation of MONUSCO’s more mobile posture, and Member States are considering the implications of these cuts on the implementation of the mandate.
CIVIC’s UN Program connects our innovative country programs and on-the-ground research with high-level advocacy at UN headquarters. In 2017, CIVIC called on Member States and the UN Secretariat to take political action to strengthen the protection of civilians. Driven by research, data, and civilian voices, our advocacy resulted in civilian harm mitigation receiving priority emphasis in the UN Secretary-General’s annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict. For the first time ever, that report included a call for governments and regional and intergovernmental organizations to develop and implement national policies and strategies on the protection of civilians and civilian harm mitigation.

A trusted advisor to Member States and the UN, CIVIC also works to improve the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping. Throughout 2017, we continued to press Member States and the UN Secretariat to improve how they measure peacekeeping operation success, provide capabilities needed to fulfill mandates, assess peacekeeper performance in the field, and hold peacekeepers accountable for failures.

Recognizing the power of working in coalition, we convene NGO partners to join us in our UN advocacy on a wide variety of issues that will further the protection of civilians.
PEACEKEEPING

MALI For nearly a decade, the current conflict in Mali has displaced and harmed civilians. In 2017, CIVIC re-established a project in Mali to undertake research and advocacy on the efforts by the UN peacekeeping operation there, known by the acronym MINUSMA, to protect civilians in the country. In July, CIVIC undertook an in-depth assessment of MINUSMA and shared the findings with key UN Member States and Secretariat stakeholders.

CIVIC found that MINUSMA has increased efforts to prioritize protection of civilians but, if it is to meet its obligations, will need also to increase its efforts to identify and mitigate harm that could result from its presence and activities. Non-state armed groups target government and international actors, including MINUSMA, and may retaliate against communities that engage with them.

SOUTH SUDAN As the conflict in South Sudan entered its fifth year, the UN peacekeeping operation there, known by the acronym UNMISS, began to address key operational challenges to the effective protection of civilians that were identified by CIVIC’s 2016 reports: Under Fire and A Refuge in Flames. In 2017, CIVIC tracked UNMISS’s progress implementing these reforms and continued to advocate for improved protection capabilities. We also conducted in-depth analysis on the strengths and limitations of UNMISS’s community engagement activities, which we shared in our report, Let US Be a Part of It: Community Engagement by the Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan.

CIVIC’s Peacekeeping Director was one of two civil society representatives invited to speak at the 2017 Peacekeeping Defense Ministerial, hosted in Vancouver, Canada. In only its second year, the annual Ministerial included high-level representatives, including Ministers of Defense from 79 countries and 5 international organizations. CIVIC was asked to address the reforms necessary to rapidly deploy peacekeeping operations to protect civilians.

LET US BE A PART OF IT

In December 2017, following our in-depth field research, CIVIC released Let US Be a Part of It: Community Engagement by the Peacekeeping Mission in South Sudan. Based on interviews with civilians, officials of the peacekeeping mission, humanitarians, and civil society actors, the report details how the military, police, and civilian components of the UN peacekeeping operation in South Sudan (UNMISS) engage with communities to understand and address civilian protection concerns. Whether by UNMISS uniformed personnel on patrol, or Civil Affairs staff conducting inter-communal and subnational dialogues, engagement is a vital part of involving civilians in their own protection. The report highlights the importance of conducting strategic and coordinated engagement activities and ensuring that the information collected from civilians is used to inform operational decisions.
“On November 30, the United States reversed a 2008 policy that had ended the use of unreliable cluster munitions, despite the fact that these weapons have killed and maimed thousands of civilian men, women, and children globally. This decision sets a dangerous precedent. Instead of walking away from previous commitments, the United States should get back in step with the 102 other countries — including its closest allies — that have banned these weapons.”
"We just ran from one neighborhood to another. It's all we could do," a 43-year-old woman from Aden, Yemen, told CIVIC in describing her only option for protecting herself and her family amidst one of the world's most tragic civil wars.

For many civilians living in conflict zones, particularly in the Middle East and South Asia, seeking safety from shelling, bombings, and death is a daily reality. In Afghanistan, over 10,000 civilians were killed and injured in 2017 alone. In Syria, over 450,000 have been killed over the past seven years, with peace nowhere in sight. Meanwhile, the war in Yemen has resulted in over 10,000 deaths in three years.

The rise of the Islamic State (ISIS) further complicated an already unstable region, displacing millions as it took large swaths of Iraq and Syria, terrorizing civilians, especially women and minorities, who have suffered unimaginable horror. The military defeat of ISIS in Iraq gives new hope for stability and reduced violence in the region, but unless governments commit to protect and follow through on those commitments, hope for civilians is fragile.

To that end, CIVIC’s work in 2017 throughout the region focused both on government actors and civilian communities. With government actors, we emphasized advocacy, assistance, and training support to improve civilian protection practices. With civilian communities, we provided tools to equip those impacted by violence to advocate for protection.

AFGHANISTAN In 2017, the government of Afghanistan approved the Afghan Civilian Casualty Mitigation and Prevention policy committing all government institutions to reduce and prevent harm. This landmark policy is the first by any country to commit to harm mitigation. CIVIC provided technical assistance to the Office of the National Security Advisor during the creation of the policy and is now part of a working group to implement the policy.

Over the course of the year, CIVIC also expanded the Civilian Protection Working Groups (CPWG) from Kabul to Baghlan and Kandahar provinces. These initiatives coalesced Afghan civil society to focus on protection of civilians and build capacity to advocate for change.
AFGHANISTAN

In 2017, CIVIC created and piloted Civilian Community Protection Councils (CCPC), led by respected community leaders from Baghlan and Kandahar provinces, to better identify the most urgent protection needs of civilians in areas experiencing armed conflict, and to build their capacity to engage on protection with both pro- and anti-government forces. The CCPCs directly amplify civilian voices and raise their concerns to both government officials and security actors. The establishment of the CCPCs has created hope amongst civilians in Afghanistan for improved protection.

In August, CCPC member, Mohammad Zamani from Pulikhumri, Baghlan, told CIVIC, “It [the CCPC] is a glitter of hope at the end of a dark tunnel of constant violation for the civilians.”

Sayeed Mohammad Naim, another CCPC member from Kandahar, shared with us, “It is good to mobilize people. I think protesting and criticizing government and ANDSF is not always the answer. That is [where] creating a local mechanism like CCPC comes in so we can be part of the solution. We have a lot of hopes for this institution as it’s ours and designed for the very community [in which] we live.”
MENA AND SOUTH ASIA

CIVIC founded gender-inclusive Community Civilian Protection Councils (CCPCs) in Baghlan and Kandahar provinces. CCPCs in Afghanistan equip communities impacted by violence to influence both government forces and opposition groups on the issues of protection and reduction of violence. CIVIC’s CPWGs and CCPCs in Afghanistan equip civilians to play a role in their own protection and have their voices heard by government and non-state armed actors. In 2018, this work will expand to Herat and Nangarhar provinces.

IRAQ AND SYRIA In Iraq, as the fight between ISIS and Iraqi and Kurdish forces supported by the US-led anti-ISIS coalition intensified and moved to urban areas such as Mosul, civilians struggled to find safety from fighting and escape horrific treatment by ISIS. Throughout 2017, CIVIC closely monitored the war’s impact on civilians, many of whom ISIS prevented from leaving or targeted as they fled the area. In February, CIVIC entered East Mosul to conduct interviews with civilians and issued a Policy Brief on Civilian Protection in the Current Mosul Campaign with recommendations to the Iraqi forces, as well as the coalition, of further steps to reduce civilian harm. In March, CIVIC was invited to meet with key military leaders from the Iraq and Syria campaign at US Central Command (CENTCOM) to share concerns on civilian protection.

As the fight to retake West Mosul intensified, CIVIC conducted interviews with civilians leaving the area and raised concerns with officials on the impact of urban fighting on civilians and civilian infrastructure. Our advocacy initiatives included private meetings with senior government officials and public efforts, including op-eds and policy briefs, as well as roundtables with key military and civilian stakeholders in Washington, DC and Baghdad. We also presented at US Special Forces pre-deployment trainings for Iraq and Syria, sharing how civilians are impacted and the precautionary measures need to be taken to avoid further harm.

Throughout 2017, CIVIC continued to deliver training to the Kurdish Peshmerga forces and Iraqi Security Forces (ISF) on civilian protection. Our staff utilized a scenario-based Protection of Civilians curriculum to provide two-day protection workshops for four Peshmerga brigades comprised of senior and mid-level commanders. Continued advocacy with the Ministry of the Peshmerga led to the development of an Initial Incident Report for recording civilian harm, which, when fully implemented, will standardize the practice for recording incidents of harm. In late 2017, CIVIC began developing a new curriculum for civilian protection. Once completed in 2018, this new tool will serve as a cornerstone of our upcoming training workshops with the newly formed Nineveh Police in Mosul and Federal Police in Baghdad.
MENA AND SOUTH ASIA

Based on our first-hand account of the operations in Mosul and the impact of the conflict on civilians, CIVIC directly engaged with the US government, seeking improvements to the targeting of armed actors in densely populated areas, as well as assessment processes used to measure civilian harm. This advocacy effort deepened as CIVIC produced *Recommendations to the Anti-ISIS Coalition on Operations in Syria*, which called on the US and coalition forces to include training in civilian harm mitigation for local forces as the operations against ISIS in Raqqa, Syria intensified.

**YEMEN** In January, CIVIC released *We Lived Days in Hell: Civilian Perspectives on the Conflict in Yemen*, a report detailing accounts of civilian harm in Yemen. Following the release of the report, CIVIC and the US Institute of Peace co-hosted a roundtable discussion on Yemen. This event brought together key Yemeni and US government officials, including the Yemeni Ambassador, and subject matter experts to discuss methods for area stabilization, training of security forces on civilian protection, and future reduction of civilian harm.

In November, CIVIC co-signed an open letter with 19 other international NGOs to the United Kingdom and US governments calling for unfettered humanitarian access, resumption of peace process, and an end to violations against civilians in Yemen. Following that letter, the US administration publicly urged the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to allow food, fuel, water, and medicine to enter Yemen.

As a result of CIVIC’s leadership and advocacy efforts for the reduction of civilian harm in Yemen, we received a two-year funding commitment to implement civilian protection trainings with security forces and increase community engagement with the government in Yemen.

**EXPLOSIVE WEAPONS IN POPULATED AREAS (EWIPA):**

CIVIC has continued to raise awareness about the impact on civilians and civilian infrastructure of the use of explosive weapons in populated areas (EWIPA). Based on our field assessments, we engage with governments to urge better practices and policies on avoiding use of such weapons in urban areas. In 2017, our participation in UN-hosted events on EWIPA included presenting at the UN First Committee for Disarmament and attending events hosted by Austria and OCHA. Our work documenting effective practices on minimizing civilian harm in urban areas was adopted by ISAF and AMISOM and featured in the prestigious journal, *International Review of the Red Cross*. Appearing in the “War in Cities” edition, our article, “Minimizing Civilian Harm in Populated Areas: Examining ISAF and AMISOM Policies,” highlights lessons from Somalia and Afghanistan.

 Civilians still in Raqqa are still civilians
– Joseph Morse, CIVIC’s Senior Military Advisor for Foreign Policy

“Civilians stay in war zones for all sorts of reasons: They may lack the resources to leave, or have no other place to go. They may be unwilling to leave vulnerable family members, may not want to leave their homes, or — most likely — they are not allowed to leave.”
AFRICA

In 2017, CIVIC piloted a series of highly successful workshops in Northeastern Nigeria (Maiduguri, Dikwa, and Mubi) in order to discuss concerns over civilian harm. The workshops brought together local civilians and security forces and resulted in concrete changes for local civilians. In Dikwa, after civilians reported during the dialogues that they could not collect enough firewood within the existing perimeter, the Brigade Commander set up escorts across a wider perimeter to allow the civilian population to safely gather sufficient firewood while still under protection from attacks from Boko Haram.

We also interviewed civilians in Borno state affected by the Civilian Joint Task Force (CJTF) operations in the area. The CJTF, known in the region as the yan goro, was borne out of frustration at repeated attacks from Boko Haram factions and the military’s struggles in repelling them. While a source of protection, the CJTF growth has caused a number of concerns, which CIVIC has documented and seeks to address in 2018.

In 2017, CIVIC also conducted workshops on civilian harm mitigation with Nigeria’s security forces. CIVIC undertook research with various branches of the Nigerian army and delivered multiple lectures on civilian harm mitigation at military colleges. CIVIC then created a specialized train-the-trainer curriculum, which was delivered to members of the Nigerian Armed Forces at the Nigerian Army School of Infantry in December.

As conflicts continue across the African continent, CIVIC remains committed to amplifying the voices of civilians as we engage with governments and armed actors.

“I want to thank CIVIC for bringing us together. This is the first time I have sat down with civilians like this. I have heard many things that I will go back to discuss with my commander for future action,”

—Major in the Nigerian Army’s 28th taskforce.
“What we want is for [warring parties] to care about civilians’ lives,” Malek Khairuddin, a tribal chief in Kandahar, Afghanistan, told CIVIC. Stories like Malek’s are what continue to drive CIVIC’s United States (US) program forward, allowing us to bring the voices of civilians directly to those who have the ability to influence and implement change. Whether it be the White House, the Hill, the State Department, or the Pentagon, CIVIC’s US Program ensures that Malek’s story, and the voices of the millions of civilians caught in conflict, are heard.

The 2016 election and subsequent 2017 inauguration of US President Donald Trump marked a dramatic shift in US foreign and military policy. Given uncertainty around the new administration’s policies, CIVIC placed greater emphasis on congressional engagement and relationship building, generating increased support from the legislative branch through sustained education and interface. In December, President Trump signed the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act, which included at least six provisions related to protecting civilians.

In anticipation of the Trump administration’s changes to Obama-era rules governing drone strikes, CIVIC began to heavily engage with the Department of Defense, the National Security Council, and the State Department in order to impress upon government agencies the importance of preserving critical measures for the protection of civilians during US- and coalition-led counterterrorism operations. Additionally, CIVIC advocated and engaged with the Department of Defense to uphold and strengthen civilian harm mitigation practices and policies in active combat operations.

In December, following a year of consistent advocacy, CIVIC was invited to meet with US Secretary of Defense James Mattis and members of his senior staff. At that high-level meeting, CIVIC shared several pragmatic policy recommendations and was provided the opportunity to discuss issues that matter most to our organization.

Throughout 2017, CIVIC’s US Program continued to develop deeper relationships with the US military and interacted frequently with its operational elements (CENTCOM and AFRICOM). These interactions provided CIVIC critical insights into the operational policy constraints and variables that could lead to greater civilian harm.

CIVIC’s public voice continues to grow, as evidenced by a number of op-eds, quotes in print media, and radio and television appearances. Editorial pieces from the US program appear in several publications, including Defense One and USA Today.

With the US program’s increased focus on security assistance, CIVIC has identified opportunities to integrate greater concern for civilians in a range of security cooperation activities, to include arms sales, training, and exercises.
“Both sides don’t protect civilians at all. They are shooting and playing their game and they don’t care about us,”
—18-year-old Olga, living in what remains of Opytne, Eastern Ukraine.

UKRAINE

Fighting across the Donbass region of Eastern Ukraine has entered its fourth year and civilians throughout the area remain under the daily threat of violence. As the international community continues to focus elsewhere, CIVIC has remained committed to advocating for better protection for the civilians caught in the conflict.

In 2017, CIVIC carried out a study of existing protection mechanisms to identify areas where the Ukrainian government should seek to improve current, or create new, policies, practices, and trainings in order to better protect civilians and address civilian harm. CIVIC released *Ukraine: Protection of Civilians Capabilities Assessment*, a landmark study targeted to the Ukrainian government that addressed the government’s civilian protection capabilities. To implement some of the recommendations presented in the report, CIVIC has received funding from the European Union to increase the capacity of the Ukrainian government to prevent and address civilian harm in Eastern Ukraine.
EUROPE

In Ukraine, stories like Olga’s are far too common. In 2017, CIVIC launched a new Europe Program focused on encouraging the European Union (EU) to mainstream civilian protection in its policy, doctrine, practice, and training. Through this work, the EU will better understand the conflicts in their backyard, such as the one in Ukraine, and receive pragmatic recommendations for how to improve the situation for civilians stuck in this forgotten war.

Our recently launched Europe Program will provide technical assistance to Europe-based institutions and select states as they claim a leadership role on protection by providing critical expertise and pragmatic guidance. In order to maximize impact, this program will also bolster the expertise of European civil society organizations, and establish strong links and collaboration with CIVIC’s flagship programs in the US, Middle East, and Africa to share best practices and maximize CIVIC’s global impact.

Our advocacy will focus on four key European countries: the UK, France, Germany, and the Netherlands. In addition, CIVIC’s Europe staff will continue to work with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) to ensure that it fully implements its current civilian protection policy, including the adoption of standing tools and training.

The need to better protect civilians is not only an ethical imperative for Europe, it is a strategic one. Europe’s leadership on civilian protection is needed to address its own conduct and the policies and practices of its local security partners in conflict countries.

OFFICER SPOTLIGHT

“CIVIC’s report, We Are Afraid of Silence, focused on civilian voices from the Donbass region. The report cover features an unexploded MLRS rocket lodged into the ground. This was 1 of 32 rockets that hit Kramatorsk, Eastern Ukraine, on February 10, 2015, a day that saw 64 casualties: 17 killed and 47 wounded.

For me, the conflict in Ukraine is personal. I survived the shelling on February 10, and I was there to witness the casualties.

At CIVIC, I work every day to advocate for civilians in conflict zones. The memories of that day fuel my work as colleagues and I explore the capabilities of the Ukrainian government to prevent future harm to civilians, and be the voice for civilians who no longer have one.”

SERGII DOMA, CIVIC’s Program Officer, Ukraine
THANK YOU
Dear Friends,

2017 was a watershed year for CIVIC; we increased our team size 120% to 42 and growing, opened offices on three continents, boosted our budget by 67%, and increased our engagement with governments, international organizations, and on-the-ground security forces. At the center of it all remained the commitment to our mission: to work with armed actors and civilians in conflict to develop and implement solutions to prevent, mitigate, and respond to civilian harm.

Just as important, we continued our pledge to civilians to bring their stories to those in power. Civilians are, and will always be, at the heart of CIVIC’s work.

When civilians speak, CIVIC listens.

The work our team members are doing on the ground gives me hope that we can create sustainable change in how armed actors view civilians trapped in conflict zones, and also how civilians view their own agency. From a tribal chief in Afghanistan to a survivor in Yemen, we are honored to listen to civilians’ stories and share examples with you in this year’s report.

In 2017, based on the knowledge and momentum gained in our first fourteen years, we launched a strategic plan for our next three years, informed by input from every team member throughout the organization, and from our most trusted partners. As we dive into the first year of our plan, we are resolute in our work with local partners in Nigeria, Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Ukraine. The impact of established engagement with multinational actors, including the United Nations and NATO, will grow and we will continue to press the United States to adopt and promote the highest standards of protection.

None of this inspiring work would be possible without your sustained support. As an increasing number of civilians are impacted by conflicts around the world, you can count on CIVIC to listen to civilians, understand their needs, and take action to make them safer.

With gratitude and respect,

Susan Sherer Osnos

Letter from Board Chair

UNHCR/Ed Dorfman
## Statements of Financial Position

### ASSETS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>DEC 31 2017</th>
<th>DEC 31 2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cash</td>
<td>3,234,103</td>
<td>1,159,053</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accounts receivable</td>
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<td>Contributions receivable</td>
<td>5,440,795</td>
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<td>Prepaid expenses and other assets</td>
<td>64,627</td>
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<td>Property and equipment, net</td>
<td>97,558</td>
<td>68,694</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,839,583</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,016,659</strong></td>
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### LIABILITIES & NET ASSETS

#### Liabilities

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<tr>
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<th>DEC 31 2017</th>
<th>DEC 31 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Accounts payable and accrued expenses</td>
<td>184,517</td>
<td>141,849</td>
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<td>Deferred rent</td>
<td>11,653</td>
<td>18,138</td>
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<td><strong>SUBTOTAL LIABILITIES</strong></td>
<td><strong>196,170</strong></td>
<td><strong>159,987</strong></td>
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#### Net Assets

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<tr>
<td>Unrestricted</td>
<td>1,956,539</td>
<td>513,454</td>
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<td>Temporarily restricted</td>
<td>6,686,874</td>
<td>1,343,218</td>
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<td><strong>SUBTOTAL NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,643,413</strong></td>
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### TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS

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<tr>
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<th>DEC 31 2016</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</strong></td>
<td><strong>8,839,583</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,016,659</strong></td>
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## Statement of Activities

### REVENUE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Contributions</td>
<td>10,583,273</td>
<td>2,041,255</td>
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<td>In-kind revenue</td>
<td>226,950</td>
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<td>Contract Income</td>
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<td>63,437</td>
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<td>Other Income</td>
<td>1,264</td>
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<td><strong>TOTAL REVENUE</strong></td>
<td><strong>10,811,487</strong></td>
<td><strong>2,211,699</strong></td>
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Statement of Activities (continued)

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<tr>
<th>Category</th>
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<tr>
<td>Country Operations</td>
<td>2,736,815</td>
<td>1,895,863</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting Services</td>
<td>1,287,931</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total Expenses</td>
<td>4,024,746</td>
<td>2,340,409</td>
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<td>Change in Net Assets</td>
<td>6,786,741</td>
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Statement of Functional Expenses: January through December 2017

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Programs</th>
<th>MGMT Services</th>
<th>Development</th>
<th>TOTAL SUPPORTING EXPENSES</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salaries and Related Costs</td>
<td>1,705,656</td>
<td>602,000</td>
<td>200,664</td>
<td>802,664</td>
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<td>Occupancy</td>
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<td>49,561</td>
<td>16,520</td>
<td>66,081</td>
<td>206,501</td>
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<td>Travel &amp; Travel Related Costs</td>
<td>308,132</td>
<td>108,754</td>
<td>36,250</td>
<td>145,004</td>
<td>453,136</td>
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<tr>
<td>Technology &amp; Supplies</td>
<td>94,338</td>
<td>33,302</td>
<td>11,097</td>
<td>44,399</td>
<td>138,737</td>
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<tr>
<td>Special Events</td>
<td>54,651</td>
<td>19,290</td>
<td>6,429</td>
<td>25,719</td>
<td>80,370</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Fees</td>
<td>412,075</td>
<td>145,448</td>
<td>48,477</td>
<td>193,925</td>
<td>606,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other Costs</td>
<td>21,543</td>
<td>7,606</td>
<td>2,533</td>
<td>10,139</td>
<td>31,682</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expense</strong></td>
<td>2,736,815</td>
<td>965,961</td>
<td>321,970</td>
<td>1,287,931</td>
<td>4,024,746</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
SUPPORTERS

Foundation Support
Anonymous
Alexander Soros Foundation
Oak Foundation
Open Society Foundations
Rockefeller Brothers Fund
The Countess Moira Charitable Foundation

Corporate Support
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld
Craigslist Charitable Fund

Gifts In Kind
Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld
Salesforce Foundation

Government Support
European Union (European Commission, External Actions of the European Union)
Federal Republic of Germany Foreign Office/Ministry of Foreign Affairs
The United Kingdom, Department for International Development
Kingdom/State of the Netherlands, Ministry of Foreign Affairs + Ministry of Foreign Trade and Development Cooperation
Sweden, Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
The Swiss Confederation, The Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs

Major Gifts
Anonymous
Ken, Deborah, and Ellie Baron
Frances Bertagnolli
Jocelyn Colquhoun
Sabra Field
Ilaria and Marco Gregotti
Sarah Holewinski
John Luongo
Tom and Sandra McCarthy
Aryeh Neier
Griff and Liz Norquist
Melissa Ong
Open Society Institute Matching Gifts Program
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James Wood
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Thomas McCarthy
Tawanda Mutasah
Aryeh Neier
Griff Norquist
Melissa Ong
David Quigley
Elizabeth Seuling

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John Chromy
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Col. (Ret.) Jay Parker, PhD
April Pedersen
Anil Soni
Peter F. Windrem
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Jessi Ginther – Senior Director, Operations
Marla B. Keenan – Senior Director, Programs

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Jay Morse – Senior Military Advisor
Lee Sutton – Senior Advisor, Monitoring & Evaluation

Africa Program
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David Azutoru – Senior Training Advisor, Nigeria
Sadeeq Garba Shehu – Senior Military Advisor, Northeast Nigeria
Shambhavi Murthy-Gopalkrishna – Country Director, Nigeria
Chitra Nagarajan – Senior Advisor, Northeast Nigeria
Julius Nasamu Gaiya – Program Assistant, Nigeria
Arome Ogijo Emmanuel – Country Operations Manager, Nigeria

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Alison Giffen – Director, Peacekeeping Program
Benedicte Aboul-Nasr – Program Associate, Africa and Peacekeeping
Alexandra Kuin – Researcher/Analyst, Peacekeeping
Lauren Spink – Advisor, Peacekeeping

MENA and South Asia Program
Sahr Muhammedally – Director, MENA & South Asia
Osamah Ali – Program Officer, Iraq
Ali Al-Assaf – Country, Director, Iraq
Ali Al-Naseri – Operations Manager, Iraq
Shahm Abawy – Logistics Assistant
Caroline Baudot – Researcher/Analyst – Iraq
Mundra Hassan – Program Officer, Iraq
Jordan Lesser-Roy – Program Associate, MENA & South Asia
Hadi Marifat – Senior Program Officer, Afghanistan
Saman Omar – Program Officer, Iraq

United States Program
Daniel R. Mahanty – Director, US Program
Julie Snyder – Research and Advocacy Associate, US Program

Europe Program
Liza Baran – Country Director, Ukraine
Sergii Doma – Senior Program Officer

Operations
Christopher Allbritton – Manager, Communications
Anysa Badran – Program Assistant
Emily Erfani – Manager, Operations
Patricia Martin – Manager, Accounting/Finance
Lee McClure – Manager, Development (Governments & Foundations)
Sue Pang – Manager, Operations
Mikhaela Payden-Travers – Manager, Development (Individual & Corporate Giving)
Kate Raley – Associate, Communications

2017 Interns
Natasha Apio
RaeAnn Dietlin
Margot Heraud
Samuli Harju
Anna Khalfaoui
Will Pons
Savannah San Pedro
Sara Oh
“When we talk, we do see something improve,”
—a civilian leader from South Sudan on bringing concerns about civilian well-being to the UN Police.
RECOGNIZE. PREVENT. PROTECT. AMEND.