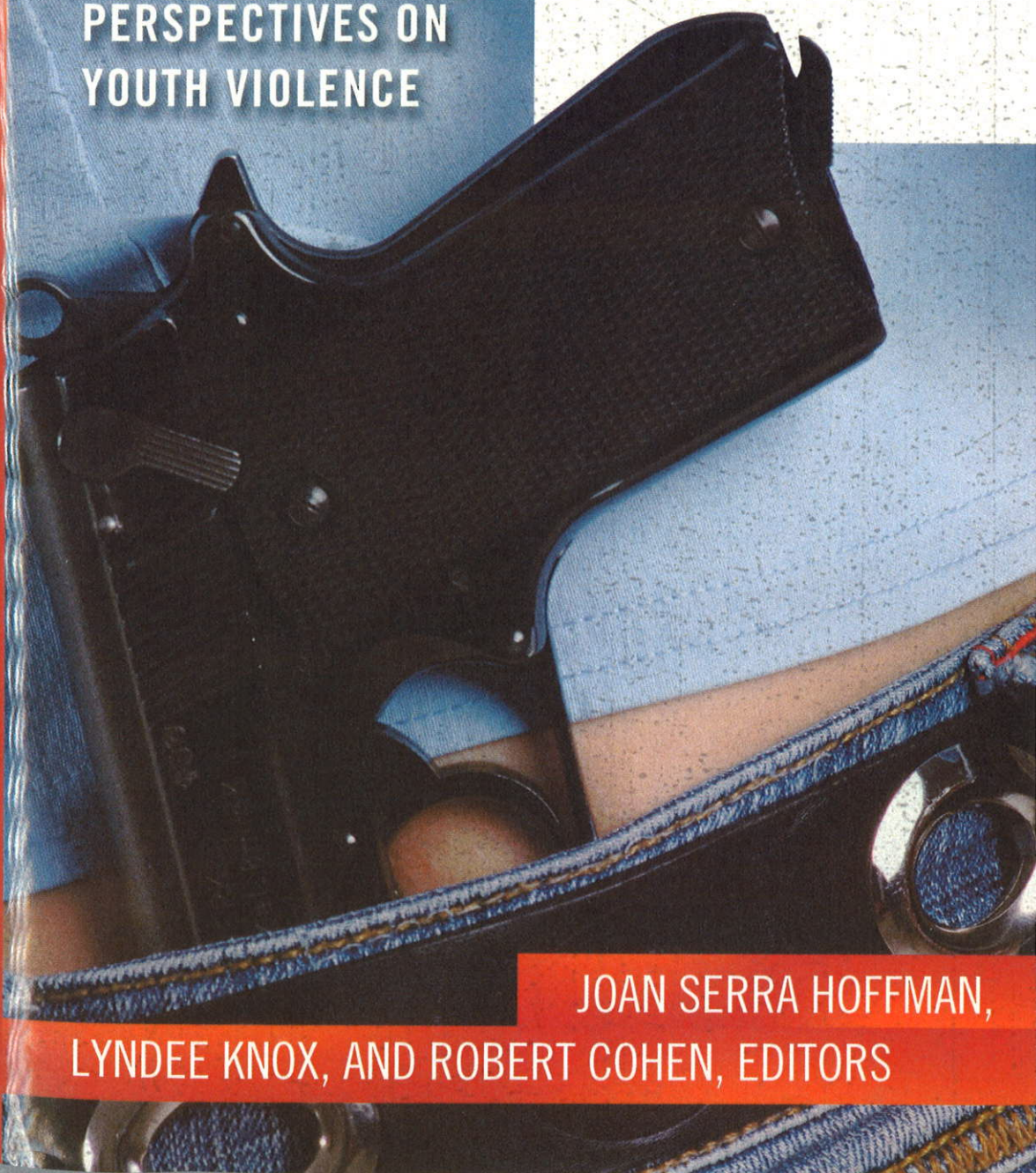


**BEYOND**

**SUPPRESSION**

**GLOBAL  
PERSPECTIVES ON  
YOUTH VIOLENCE**



**JOAN SERRA HOFFMAN,  
LYNDEE KNOX, AND ROBERT COHEN, EDITORS**

GLOBAL PERSPECTIVES

# BEYOND SUPPRESSION

Global Trade in Human Beings

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## Global Perspectives on Youth Violence

JOAN SERRA HOFFMAN, LYNDEE KNOX,  
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*Global Crime and Justice*

Graeme R. Newman, Series Editor



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## The CeaseFire Method Applied to Iraq: Changing Thinking and Reducing Violence

Gary Slutkin, Zainab al-Suwaij, Karen Volker, R. Brent Decker, and Josh Gryniewicz

Basrah, Iraq. It is a sweltering 118 degree day. Under normal circumstances, such scorching heat might be enough to fray even the steadiest of nerves—and the situation in war-torn Iraq is far from normal. Electricity is available two hours for every four, leaving a brief window in which to cool a home. Armed with a loaded shotgun a man furiously strides across a back alleyway to confront his neighbor. He is following a thick black cable running across the yards, proof that the neighbor is a “thief” who has been siphoning electricity from his family’s generator.

WHEN VIOLENCE HAS been normalized to a great degree, small incidents like this can flare up in instant, costing lives, and sometimes escalating into large-scale family disputes. The Basrah Anti-Violence Campaign (BAVC) a collaboration between CeaseFire, a public health violence reduction model and the American Islamic Congress (AIC), intervenes in situations of community conflict (youth violence, car and motorbike accidents, bad business transactions, and tribal conflicts) before they result in bloodshed. Outreach staff in Basrah, like their Chicago-based counterparts, focus primarily on personal clashes intervening in issues between people before they deteriorate into larger group conflicts. These conflicts often incorporate tribal affiliations, which can start from a community problem, but grow out of longstanding rivalries between competing tribal groups, as well as family violence between in-laws in different tribes.

In the situation involving the generator, the mediator was able to get the neighbors talking, before the gun was used. The neighbor responsible for the theft complained that the generator was a loud, noisy machine and that the generator-owner had allowed other neighbors access to the electricity to compensate. He felt slighted that he had not been offered the same deal, he explained. The mediator

helped both parties reach a peaceful resolution not only by seeing one another's point of view—which would have been impossible without intervention—but also by emphasizing the situation was not worth a life. CeaseFire maintains that regardless of the circumstances or cultural context the use of violence in the presence of a grievance can always be prevented if an interrupting intervention can be applied. By being aware of the persons and groups involved, those at the highest risk of being a perpetrator or a victim of violence, conflicts can be effectively mediated and efforts can be advanced to change the norms and social pressure that otherwise reinforce violence.

### THE CEASEFIRE MODEL

CeaseFire is a “disruptive” innovation because it ideologically challenges the prevailing paradigms around the causes of violence and how it should be addressed. The CeaseFire model draws on key components of a disease-control methodology that are applied to violence. It is based on the understanding that violence is a learned behavior and that it behaves like an infectious disease. Research indicates that violence, like other behaviors, is acquired or learned—mainly through modeling, observing, imitating, or copying. We learn socially from those around us how to act, what to do, and what is expected of us. After the age of 10, these behaviors become unconsciously “regulated” not by family, but by peers. Social norms, the expectations of an immediate peer group, are the greatest indicator to predict how an individual will respond to a given situation, including whether or not they will react violently when “feeling” threatened, insulted, or wronged. Furthermore, the greatest predictors of violent “events,” regardless of the specific political, religious, social, or economic motivations for violence or how it manifests (tribal conflict, militia warfare, street gangs), are prior events. Just as nothing predicts a case of influenza as accurately as exposure to a prior active case of influenza, nothing predicts a violent act as accurately as a preceding violent act—committed against you, someone close to you, or to your group. Accordingly, CeaseFire's successful approach to street violence focuses directly on those young people who are at the highest risk for initiating violence or being a victim of it, intervenes in conflicts likely to result in violence and then more violence, promotes and trains in nonviolent alternatives to conflict, insults, or events, and ultimately shifts community norms.

CeaseFire's clients usually are beyond the reach of conventional services and without effective intervention their next encounters with the system are likely to be law enforcement or prison, the emergency room, or the grave. The CeaseFire model approaches violence as an epidemic, and like all epidemics, it must (1) detect and interrupt all potential transmission, (2) determine who might transmit next, and likewise reverse the transmission potential (for violence, the thinking that violence is expected of them by their peers), and (3) change community norms. Violence interrupters keep the pulse of the community and are trained to be able to

only by seeing one another's without intervention—but also CeaseFire maintains that regardless of violence in the presence of an intervention can be applied. First, those at the highest risk of violence can be effectively mediated through social pressure that otherwise

it ideologically challenges violence and how it should be understood as a disease-control model based on the understanding that violence is like an infectious disease. Violence is acquired or learned—through copying. We learn socially from those expected of us. After the age of 12, “cultured” not by family, but by the peer group, are the greatest threat to a given situation, including “religion” threatened, insulted, or “provoked” events,” regardless of the motivations for violence or how dangerous (in the United States), are prior events. Just as exposure to a prior active case is usually as a preceding violent act, or to your group. Accordance focuses directly on those causing violence or being a victim of violence and then more violence, conflict, insults, or events, and

of conventional services and those with the system are likely to die, or the grave. The CeaseFire model like all epidemics, it must (1) determine who might transmit violence (for violence, the thinking that (2) change community norms. (3) change community norms. Community and are trained to be able to

detect who has a grievance and might be thinking about or planning a violent event, and because of who is selected (persons from the same in-group) and how they are trained, they can intervene effectively to prevent the event from happening. This is not about law enforcement (or “snitching”), but rather the use of confidential health-based intervention methods for changing thinking. For the second part of the CeaseFire disease-control system, CeaseFire uses outreach workers, each of whom carries a caseload of 15 to 20 of the highest risk clients—person from the highest risk groups and situations who may not be planning events right now, but can be determined to be at risk in the next few weeks or months. The outreach workers engage with them to change their thinking about violence, as well as changing their level of risk for violence by redirecting them toward more positive paths. The third part of the CeaseFire system is work at community level to change overall norms of the community. This component includes motivating community-level responses to all violent events, involvement of the clergy and residents in specific actions, and a public education campaign to change the thinking. More detailed information about the intervention model in action is provided in the next sections.

### BRINGING THE CEASEFIRE PROGRAM TO IRAQ

By 2005, Chicago's CeaseFire efforts already were reducing shootings and killings in highly affected communities in the United States, and cities from around the country, as well as internationally were beginning to visit Chicago to see how the new method worked. In June 2005, First Lady Laura Bush visited CeaseFire's Chicago project as part of the White House's Helping America's Youth (HAY) initiative. The goal of the HAY initiative was to highlight programs nationwide (in the United States) that were performing interventions and changing the lives of the highest risk young people. CeaseFire outreach workers and violence interrupters were soon to be profiled by the HAY initiative for their efforts on behalf of youth likely to be involved in violence. This June visit would prove to be the starting point for conversations on how the CeaseFire model might be adapted and used to change the overall situation in Iraq.

Although the purpose of the First Lady's trip was to visit and highlight youth intervention programs in U.S. cities, the First Lady had more than that on her mind: that summer there had been an increase of insurgent activity in Iraq and conversations rapidly turned toward application of the CeaseFire model to violence in Iraq. As the CeaseFire model is predicated on the understanding that violence is an acquired or learned behavior that escalates in an epidemic fashion, the cross-cultural applications were well worth discussing, and perhaps implicit.

Dr. Slutkin, founder and executive director of CeaseFire, said to Mrs. Bush during her site visit, “I've been thinking about the suicide bombings, and how they are frequently performed under peer pressure and responding to the expectations of the bomber's social group—and without sufficient social pressure and intervention from their own group occurring in the opposite direction.”

Mrs. Bush responded, "I've been thinking about that same thing myself on the way to visiting with you." Later, Mrs. Bush would arrange a key meeting that would lead to other meetings with leading policy makers.

Even with the CeaseFire epidemiological model being a potential fit for some of the issues in Iraq, it would take a considerable amount of effort to move the thinking and a project forward. After some initial informal meetings with senior members in the State Department, Karen Volker, a long-term U.S. Department of State Foreign Service Officer, was tasked with looking into the applications for the CeaseFire model in Iraq. At the time, she was part of a high-level intra-agency government task force, including representatives from the Department of Defense, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the Department of Energy, and others to focus on countering violent extremism. Volker became a strong advocate for adapting the CeaseFire approach for use in Iraq. Although she and others saw the potential for applying CeaseFire to the issue in Iraq, not everyone was convinced. Conversations between these groups would ensue, and many materials on the thinking behind the new approach to reducing violence would be developed and distributed to policy makers and to State and Defense Department officials sent to serve in Iraq.

It frequently was mentioned in Washington and in Iraq that "it is not a military solution, but a political solution that is needed." The CeaseFire intervention, however, fills the frequently not discussed, but essential, "third space"—the human space that is present but usually unfilled when a dispute or retaliation or violent act is resistant to both of these usual responses. This space exists because (1) the military or police cannot be in all places, and (2) all disputes are not political, and even when political solutions are developed, not everyone and all groups agree with the political solution. In other words, it frequently is hard to develop "political" solutions to a perceived need for retaliation—whether it is a provoked attack like the Samarra Mosque, or over a personal, family, or tribal conflict (see table 6.1). As a result of the new or "disruptive" ideas inherent in CeaseFire—that this is essentially about community-level change in Iraq—Volker would have to champion the project from within the Department of State through an

Table 6.1 Community Mobilization: The Missing Piece

How CeaseFire Adds to Military and Political Processes, and *Fills the Gap* in Iraq

1. Police and military efforts	2. CeaseFire campaign	3. Political and diplomatic negotiation
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Apprehends/kills some offenders</li> <li>• Provides presence; deterrence</li> <li>• Can't be in all places</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobilizes the community itself</li> <li>• Prevents retaliations</li> <li>• Offers face saving</li> <li>• Reverses social pressure to perform acts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Addresses grievances (some)</li> <li>• But not everyone agrees</li> <li>• Not all conflicts are political</li> <li>• Provocation can subvert</li> </ul>

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piece  
ses, and *Fills the Gap* in Iraq

- 
- 3. Political and diplomatic negotiation
- 
- Addresses grievances (some)
  - But not everyone agrees
  - Not all conflicts are political
  - Provocation can subvert
- 

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odyssey of many stops and starts. In some instances, the project was intentionally derailed with officials taking ownership over it for the sole purpose of burying it. At other turns, some agencies and departments saw the potential of the approach, but were not comfortable considering ideas or an initiative that was not developed in-house—or that followed the fundamental military or political paradigm. Volker's tenacity was instrumental in bringing the project to fruition. She saw the importance and the place for civil society's involvement in the solution.

In December 2006, Slutkin and Volker had a series of meetings with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs, for example, the International Republican Institute, U.S. Institute for Peace, the National Democratic Institute), the State Department (including the Office of Policy Planning, Senior Advisor for Iraq, Office of Counter Terrorism, Office of International Women's Issues), the Defense Department (J-5, deputy director for the War on Terror, advisors to Gen. David Petraeus), and USAID. Slutkin made a subsequent visit to STRATCOM (the US Strategic Command in the Department of Defense) and Volker continued to present the CeaseFire model to officials in relevant offices throughout the government. In all of these meetings, the main ideas promoted were (1) the focus in Iraq should consider fundamentally changing from winning a war to reducing violence, (2) persons from the groups or social networks themselves would need to be involved in the solution, and (3) jobs could be created in the process. Some of the interlocutors recognized the value of trying this new approach, others did not. On one occasion, a senior advisor to General Petraeus confirmed to Volker that the CeaseFire approach would indeed work in Iraq, noting that the tribal structure in Iraq was similar to the gang structure in large U.S. cities like Chicago. The ideas and the project started getting traction after Slutkin briefed a delegation from Iraq, including an advisor to the Council of Tribal Leaders and several female parliamentarians, and stated that an approach such as this would be worth trying. At various points over the next two years, Volker continued to present the CeaseFire model to multiple agencies and offices, including the National Security Council, the U.S. Foreign Service Institute (which trains all officials who serve in Iraq), and a visiting department official from the Basrah Provincial Reconstruction Team. (This official later wrote a cable to the department in support of AIC's proposal to implement the CeaseFire model in Basrah, a proposal that eventually was funded by the Department's Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor.)

During this December 2006 visit, Zainab al-Suwaij, founder and executive director of the AIC, was introduced to the program. Al-Suwaij is no stranger to violence. In 1991, after a failed attempt to oust Saddam Hussein in the rebellion following the first Gulf War, she was forced to flee her home in Basrah, Iraq. Eventually, she found her way to the United States, carrying with her the desire to help her native country in whatever ways would be possible. This ambition led first to the formation of her organization, the American Islamic Congress (AIC) in the wake of the September 11th tragedy. At that time, AIC began a campaign to actively establish a two-way interfaith understanding between Christians and Muslims to counter strained relations between the two cultures. As the Iraq

war started, AIC began actively reaching out to many other agencies, including the U.S. State Department, to find creative solutions to end the violence and stabilize Iraq. The collaboration with CeaseFire was the missing piece of the puzzle: an opportunity to empower Iraqi communities to take responsibility for reducing violence themselves.

### IMPLEMENTING CEASEFIRE IN IRAQ

A three-fold process was used to make significant modifications to the model for adaptation to the Iraqi context. Initially, representatives from AIC visited Chicago and toured CeaseFire's flagship demonstration site on the west side of the city. They met with CeaseFire staff, interrupters, outreach workers, program coordinators, and program managers. Rather than a traditional presentation format, AIC was immersed in community-based activities in Chicago's West Garfield neighborhood to see the model at work firsthand. They accompanied outreach workers on walks through the neighborhood, attended a shooting "response," and participated in distributing public education materials. At the end of their visit, AIC staff were provided with additional CeaseFire materials for review to begin thinking through adaptation.

After AIC had the opportunity to sufficiently review training materials for several weeks and provide initial impressions and insights, CeaseFire staff traveled to Washington, D.C., where AIC is headquartered, for an intensive three-day session. Materials were reviewed step-by-step with the intent of "concretizing" the model's cultural shift from theoretical to actionable. For example, in the U.S. CeaseFire workers identify the high-risk individuals based on a set of specific criteria (for example, age, involved in a street organization, holding a significant role in a street organization, having a prior criminal history, engaged in high-risk street activity, recent victim of a shooting, or recently released from prison), but in Basrah these criteria required shifting focus. Reenvisioned for the Iraqi context, the team began to discuss application to religious leaders, community stakeholders, and tribal representatives. The key components of the model were morphed to match the situational context in Basrah.

Networking maps were constructed to identify inroads to connect with this indigenous structure. Job descriptions for outreach workers and violence interrupters were changed to reflect this approach to determine who was connected to the organizations on the ground. Similar revisions were made for the community mobilization components of the intervention. While in Chicago this component involves demonstrations, marches, and rallies, organizers had reservations about operating openly in Iraq. Based on the social and political climate, it was believed that conflict mediation staff might be marked for death, if operating publically. Community trainings were developed to engage all facets of society in peacekeeping efforts with these sensitivities in mind. Public education materials were developed to be highly culturally specific. Efforts were made

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to incorporate messaging that anticipated potential religious or tribal violence. Finally, general guidelines, revised training materials and job descriptions were presented to AIC staff.

CeaseFire staff worked intimately with the translator to ensure that presentations were conducted in Arabic to facilitate a free-flowing conversation. These discussions developed the specific details of what the program would look like on the ground. After the first five months of project implementation in Iraq, the staff reconvened to assess the project. What worked? What did not? What needed to be changed? An evaluation was conducted and changes were made to the next stage of implementation and materials were revised. Some surprising differences emerged between how the program had been envisioned and its actual implementation.

Following are the key points resulting from the evaluation:

- Tribal leaders played a larger role in mediations than initially had been anticipated.
- Conflict mediators acted more as meeting facilitators than their U.S. counterparts, convening meetings to get family, tribal leaders, and other individuals to the table to discuss events. Mediators served more as surrogate tribal infrastructure in the absence of these formal processes.
- Honor-killings or the challenges inherent in them were not sufficiently anticipated. They are so engrained in the cultural understanding that the entry-points that worked for other forms of conflict were not applicable.
- Similarly, militia-related violence was much more challenging to intervene on than initially anticipated. Conflict mediators were unable to make significant inroads to these groups and found such situations far more threatening to their personal safety to negotiate.
- Also, the active role community residents would want to play was underestimated. Community residents became instrumental in organizing and supporting events themselves and participating in messaging campaigns.
- As a result, workers were able to operate far more publically than they had anticipated. The was concern was that working out in the open could mark them, but that was not the case.

After funding to cover the elections was extended, priorities shifted to connect with a greater number of political groups. An additional 15 conflict mediators were added to the staff to think through and guide this aspect of the strategy, develop messaging specific to peacekeeping around the election, and develop inroads with these groups.

### CEASEFIRE IN BASRAH: THE BASRAH ANTI-VIOLENCE CAMPAIGN

The Basrah Anti-Violence Campaign (BAVC) is focused on reducing the number of acts of violence in Basrah, Iraq. On a broader scale, it challenges and guides civil society actors and the broader grassroots community to take

responsibility for decreasing acts of violence in Basrah, Iraq, including intertribal, interethnic, sectarian, domestic, and other types of violence. It represents the first community-centric effort of this kind in Iraq and implements a culturally specific adaptation of the CeaseFire Model in the Al-Jumhuriyah and Khamza Meel communities in Basrah, Iraq.

First, BAVC workers identify and detect potentially violent events, individuals, and groups by collecting information from a diverse variety of community sources. They engage political, religious, and tribal leadership who show up at mosques and community centers with bags of coffee or little gifts, sit down, and discuss nonviolence as a philosophy and an approach. Intertribal, interethnic, and sectarian approaches combined with the political, social, and economic tensions wrought by the war have created a climate of paranoia and fear through which personal conflict often gets mired in politics and misinformation, contributing to their escalation. To challenge these forces of influence in Basrah, outreach staff build coalitions of religious, tribal, and education leaders to endorse the concept that violence is dishonorable, rather than justified. In the past, some felt that violence was the only way to respond and that it showed strength, honor, and seriousness. The educational sessions created by the outreach staff challenge this notion and replace vindictive action with reason. BAVC workers focus considerable energy and effort on establishing trust and building rapport with leaders and citizens alike that can provide information, influence, and access.

Interruption and intervention of conflicts likely to lead to violence composes the second element of the model. BAVC workers focus on mediating conflicts between individuals before they escalate to violence or incorporate larger groups. One of the major differences in Iraqi conflict as opposed to street violence in the United States is the magnitude of casualties that can result, especially considering the accessibility of rocket launchers or bombs over handguns. A conflict between two students, for example, quickly grew to encompass both families and resulted in a shooting that could have produced a body count if not intervened in appropriately. Two students got into a fist-fight resulting in a black eye. The family of the injured student feared the worst, believing their child had been blinded, and retaliated by randomly firing a machine gun into the other student's home. Thankfully no one was hit. The family was understandably outraged that their home had been attacked and was prepared to respond violently, while the family of the injured boy was still bent on inflicting further damage to settle the score. An outreach worker was able to bring the student to the hospital to demonstrate the eye was not permanently damaged, and a second worker intervened with the other to deescalate the conflict. No further conflict or injury resulted from the event.

The third element of the model uses social marketing and public health communication strategies. CeaseFire has helped to shape an Iraqi messaging campaign to change thinking for the general public regarding violence. This approach uses empathy-based, culturally specific messages of peace, trust, and tolerance to challenge the dominant thinking about violence. These messages demonstrate how community members can play a crucial role in preventing violence and

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encourage citizens to get involved. It was crucial to the success of this campaign to incorporate input from Iraqi journalists, academics, and community and religious leaders in the development of messages and the coordination of the campaign. During a respected Shī'ah anniversary date, representing a divergence in religious thinking with the Sunni, it is common for some tribes to clash over defaced religious sites. Banners were hung in public spaces and leaflets emphasizing love and respect anticipated potential clashes and neutralized them before they occurred. A foreign NGO or externally imposed campaign would not have had as nuanced a response to anticipate these events.

Finally, data and monitoring is a fourth element of the CeaseFire model that runs throughout every step in the process. BAVC program staff analyzed violence trends in Basrah and focused the intervention specifically on violence hot-spots in Al-Jumhuriyah and Khamza Meel. Maps were developed with on-the-ground staff to identify tribal leaders that had prominence in each area and conflict groups that needed to be intervened on. Throughout model implementation, BAVC workers collect data on the number of conflicts mediated, the number of leaders recruited to become ambassadors for peace in their communities, and the number of trainings on nonviolence provided in the community.

## EVALUATION OF CEASEFIRE IN THE UNITED STATES AND IRAQ

Over the past 15 years, the CeaseFire model has been tested and replicated in Chicago, throughout Illinois, and nationwide with considerable success. An extensive, independent three-year evaluation commissioned by the U.S. Department of Justice, and led by Northwestern University, found that CeaseFire reduced shootings and killings and made neighborhoods safer, with 41 percent to 73 percent drops in shootings and killings in CeaseFire areas, and demonstrated a 100 percent success rate in reducing retaliatory killings in five of the eight communities examined. Evaluation of the Baltimore-based CeaseFire replication conducted by the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in 2009 reported similar outcomes, which suggested the program had led to fewer killings in those areas where the program was replicated with fidelity to model, and also saw the first signs of changes in the norms of the highest risk individuals in the intervention zones. The Kansas City replication also received a favorable initial evaluation of its first CeaseFire zone conducted by the Truman Medical Center in 2009, reporting a 38 percent reduction in homicides.

In a 2008 evaluation of the program, evaluators found that CeaseFire's outreach workers effectively assisted 85 to 97 percent of the youth served to find a job, enroll in school, access drug treatment, or get out of a gang. Furthermore, the survey indicated that CeaseFire workers were the second-most-important adult in their lives, second only to their parents. CeaseFire interrupters had been interrupting hundreds of conflicts and making neighborhoods safer, and shootings and killings were down in CeaseFire communities.

In the U.S. cities, CeaseFire is able to evaluate its performance and effectiveness based on changes in the number of shootings and killings in a given community or geographic area. Primarily because of many variables associated with the war in Iraq, it is difficult to have accurate baseline figures and to accurately assess the full success of the intervention and conflict mediation efforts; however, the BAVC measures the number of conflicts mediated, nonviolence training administered, numbers of community ambassadors for peace workers trained, the amount of public education material administered, and other qualitative measurements, while simultaneously compiling qualitative reports from the field staff.

In 2009, the BAVC provided intervention to 112 violent incidents and is thought to have prevented a potential killing in 105 of those cases. More than 30 nonviolence trainings were held to teach alternative strategies to resolving conflict and techniques for mediating common issues in a culturally acceptable and peaceful way. While culturally many people believe that violence is the only way to show your strength or the appropriate level of honor and respect in a given situation, these educational sessions and workshops, created by BAVC outreach staff, have challenged this notion, put workers and citizens into action, and repeatedly replaced vindictive action with reason—and potential violence with a peaceful result. Furthermore, more than 1,000 “Ambassadors for Peace” have now been specifically trained in these methods. These citizens have pledged themselves to nonviolence, have acquired new skills, now embody the philosophy and practice of nonviolence, and dedicate themselves to helping explore alternative means for resolving conflict. More than 1,500 key community stakeholders agreed to meet with BAVC and help the organization to realize its mission of peace in Basrah. In addition, more than 5,000 pieces of public education material were distributed throughout Al-Jumhuriyah and Khamza Meel.

Evidence of how deeply Basrah community members have eagerly embraced the BAVC was demonstrated during the recent BAVC-sponsored “BAVC Peace Soccer Championship.” The event brought together 13 youth soccer teams, promoting peace between and among the Khamza Meel and Al-Jumhuriyah areas of Basrah. Each team and its coaches were required to participate in conflict resolution and violence reduction training before participation and were asked to become peace ambassadors in their communities. Sadly, one of the team coaches died of natural causes in the midst of the tournament series. After suffering this loss, the team debated whether they should continue playing or withdraw from the competition. In the end, the team unanimously voted to continue playing in the tournament because it was “so important to the community.”

### LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE CEASEFIRE PROGRAM IN IRAQ

Successful replication of the CeaseFire model in Iraq validates this implicit understanding that violence is a learned behavior that acts like an infectious disease. Regardless of cultural context, political circumstances, or social situation

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## PROGRAM IN IRAQ

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surrounding violence, an intervention can be applied to the use of violence in the presence of a grievance. The BAVC validates CeaseFire's understanding that by being aware of the players involved, specifically those at the highest risk for being a perpetrator or a victim of violence, conflicts can be effectively mediated and efforts can be advanced to change the norms and social pressure that reinforce violence. A second lesson is that harnessing the power of media and the use of visual aids has been crucial to the success of the BAVC. As a part of a BAVC public messaging campaign, posters with messages of nonviolence were created to hang in target neighborhoods. Early on, the organization expected that most of these posters would be torn down. Surprisingly, and on the contrary, neighbors poured out of their homes requesting copies of the posters and asking to be able to hang them at their homes, at their storefronts, and at other highly visible locations in their communities. Journalists and media professionals provided some of the most valuable knowledge resources. The media had strong connections with a wide variety of people and often heard firsthand of threats of violence or tense situations that they could relay to BAVC staff to intervene in before the threats escalated. Initially, it had seemed that requesting the cooperation and support of tribal leaders was little more than a formality, a cultural obligation for BAVC staff. It quickly turned out to be one of the most effective violence-reduction tools. The expertise of BAVC workers and the legitimacy gained as "independent" (that is, nonaffiliated mediators) in the communities, meant tribal leaders were soon calling on workers to mediate in serious conflicts involving shootings and honor crimes, traditionally handled only within the tribal structure. After the program launched, workers began fielding intervention requests outside of the Basrah target areas and even from beyond the city as word of successful mediations spread.

One of the biggest challenges facing the BAVC was shifting a cultural perception that the government, while deemed ineffectual, was the only entity that could curb violence. Citizens perceived themselves as powerless in this type of effort. Trust can be hard to earn in Iraq. The challenge was to prove that the BAVC was trustworthy and did not have ties to militias or political entities. Since launching the program, the BAVC has received numerous requests for training, conflict intervention, and mediation techniques to curb violence from other areas of Basrah, as well as other cities in Iraq, but right now, the project simply lacks the staff resources.

One of the BAVC's biggest facilitators is people, for example, tribal leaders and journalists. Journalists were open to promoting the work and writing positive news stories. AIC's reputation in Iraq, also facilitates BAVC's efforts. Since 2003, AIC has been running programs on the ground in Iraq, building a solid reputation, an established network of contacts, and a strong track record that made the organization a credible resource for violence-prevention work. Community institutions are great facilitators. The BAVC engages previously existing, locally organized groups and cultural institutions like mosques, churches, and soccer clubs in the campaign. Partnering with an organization that is part of the local community,

perceived as politically neutral or unaffiliated and recognized as a credible messenger by the highest risk transmitters is integral to success.

Insights gleaned from the cross-cultural applications of the CeaseFire model to Iraq have served as a tremendous proof point for the underlying theories. Although CeaseFire had been proven effective for intervention with street organizations, transferring it to the Basrah context provided evidence that, regardless of the circumstances for the use of violence in the presence of grievances, an intervention can be applied. The Basrah adaptation provided a learning experience for the process involved. The organic method of reviewing and revising materials; implementation; evaluating, repeatedly assessing the project, and modifying accordingly has created a blueprint for subsequent international replications. This step-wise process has become the template for transferring the CeaseFire Model to other conflict regions.

### NEXT STEPS

Currently, CeaseFire and AIC are seeking to continue the BAVC and to expand into other Iraqi cities at the request of provincial council members, members of parliament, and tribal leaders. Continued expansion will result in the full Iraq Anti-Violence Campaign (IAVC), a national campaign centered on four strategically selected cities: greater Basrah, Baghdad, Kirkuk, and Baqubah. These cities represent a broad spectrum of Iraqi society—Shia, Sunni, Arab, Kurdish, Turkmen, and more—and much of Iraq's geography. The cities represent a microcosm of the types of violence that Iraq has suffered from for far too long—intertribal, interethnic, sectarian, and more. CeaseFire will continue to provide training and technical assistance in Iraq.

CeaseFire also is active in other regions. CeaseFire has partnered with the Citizen Security Programme to expand services to its first Caribbean-based site in Trinidad and Tobago, where the 2009 murder rate leapt to 42 per 100,000, nearly double the average of 18.1 per 100,000 for the rest of the Caribbean. Planning and discussions are under way in several other countries.

CeaseFire was named one of the top 25 organizations to work with the Ashoka network for global replication and reach. Ashoka is a global association of leading social entrepreneurs that works to address the world's most urgent social problems. Ashoka is working closely with CeaseFire to prepare further international scaling strategies. An organization interested in adapting the model to deal with their own violence issue can learn more through the CeaseFire website: [www.ceasefirechicago.org/](http://www.ceasefirechicago.org/).