



**PEACE
CONNECT**

**A global gathering of local
peacebuilders and their allies**

MEDIA KIT

Press release: Hundreds of local peacebuilders to gather at Peace Connect in Nairobi

London, UK // 26 June 2025 – Peace Direct, an international NGO dedicated to supporting local people to build peace that lasts, is hosting a global gathering for local peacebuilders and their allies this October.

Held from 13 to 17 October 2025, Peace Connect is the first global gathering of its kind. Local peacebuilders and their allies will gather in Nairobi, Kenya, for a week of connection, creativity, and collective action.

In the face of funding cuts and escalating conflict both internationally in the Middle East and Europe, and within countries like Sudan, local peacebuilders must have the chance to share their expertise and build networks for active solidarity across borders.

“The multiple crises facing the world right now, including the 120 active armed conflicts, demand an urgent and creative response,” **Dylan Mathews, Peace Direct CEO**, said. “This is what Peace Connect aims to do, bringing together some of the most pioneering, brave frontline activists and their allies to share experiences and build solidarity. The world needs more peacebuilders and we hope that Peace Connect will help catalyse new ideas and movements for peace.”

Almost 700 local peacebuilders from around the world will attend, including global leaders in peacebuilding. Representatives from all of Peace Direct’s local partners will be there – these local peacebuilders work in 14 different conflict-affected countries, such as Afghanistan, DRC, Myanmar, Sudan, and Syria.

Peace Connect will look and feel different to other international peacebuilding events. It will be a gathering that truly centres the attendees, who will have space to focus on meaningful interactions, creativity, and wellbeing.

Led by local peacebuilders, Peace Connect will disrupt the pattern of international events that exclude local voices and serve the interests of Global North powerholders. An [Advisory Group](#) of local peacebuilders is developing the programme, and will co-create sessions with attendees. Peace Connect won’t feature keynotes and plenaries, but will instead enable the gathered activists and peacebuilders to collaborate on shared priorities.

For **Diana Ishaqat, Advisory Group member and Peace Starts Here campaign co-creator from Jordan**, Peace Connect is vital amid the current funding crisis: “It can be isolating to believe in peace. In my context, peace is a word associated with giving up on rights, with painful compromise, loss of indigenous rights, and Western interference. It’s important that peace is made local, localised, and that it speaks to local peacebuilders; those who are often the first to point out the signs of brewing conflicts and their many manifestations in everyday life.”

Lina María Jaramillo, Local Peacebuilding Expert in Colombia and Advisory Group member, said: “It is paradoxical and tragic that just when the world needs more acts of

solidarity to counteract the suffering of war, a cloak of doubt has been raised over the importance of humanitarian assistance and cooperation. Today, we must connect our ideas of peace and solidarity with action if we are to sustain humanity amid this pain, death, and fear. For peacebuilding to remain possible, we must reconfigure the system and strengthen our collective action. That's why Peace Connect matters in this moment."

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Notes for editors:

[Peace Direct](#) is an international NGO based in the UK which supports local peacebuilders to stop violence and build sustainable peace. We provide funding, training and other resources to help them do the work that they feel is most relevant in their contexts. We currently support local peacebuilding efforts in 14 countries around the world. While we have been convening local peacebuilders for almost 20 years, Peace Connect is the first global gathering of peacebuilders that we have organised.

For too long, local peacebuilders' voices have been missing from mainstream narratives about conflict resolution and peace outcomes. Peace Connect will offer journalists press passes to ensure media representatives have opportunities to learn about the vital work of local peacebuilders preventing violence globally, and share the real, human stories of peacebuilders with their readers. These passes give full access, covering the total cost of the ticket. To secure a press pass, email the contacts listed below. Peace Direct is reserving at least two press passes for local journalists in Kenya.

To access images to accompany coverage of Peace Connect or Peace Direct itself, please contact the media team below.

Available for comment and op-eds:

Dylan Mathews (he/him), CEO of Peace Direct, London, UK.

Diana Ishaqat (she/her), Peace Starts Here campaign co-creator, Peace Connect Advisory Group member. Jordan.

Lina María Jaramillo Rojas (she/her), Local Peacebuilding Expert in Colombia, Peace Connect Advisory Group member. Colombia.

Martine Kessy Ekomo-Soignet (she/her), Local Peacebuilding Expert in the Central African Republic and founding director of Peace & Development Watch RCA. CAR.

Vahe Mirikian (he/him), Managing Director, Peace Direct US. Washington DC, US.

Contact:

Grace Rowley, Co-Head of Fundraising and Communications, Peace Direct.

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Jennifer Venis, Senior Communications Officer, Peace Direct. London, UK.

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About Peace Direct

Peace Direct is an international NGO dedicated to stopping violence and building peace that lasts. For 20 years, we have championed and invested in locally led peacebuilding, because we believe peacebuilding efforts rooted in local expertise are more effective, responsive and sustainable.

We partner with local peacebuilders who are saving lives, tackling the root causes of conflict, and creating the conditions for peace that lasts. The peacebuilding efforts we support are completely owned and led by local peacebuilders – they're adapted to local contexts, responsive to community needs, and built on the vital expertise of people who truly understand the conflict.

Peace Direct's role is to offer these local peacebuilders the practical support, funding, resources, and solidarity they need to make peace possible.

We currently partner with **27 local peacebuilding organisations in 14 countries** across Africa, Asia and the Americas. Together, we're changing lives every day. We get children out of armed groups and into schools, we prevent human rights violations, and we help communities that have fought for generations to find their shared humanity and create a better future for their grandchildren. Learn more about [our partners](#) and [their work](#).

In addition to direct support to peacebuilders, **we endeavour to increase wider support for locally led peacebuilding:** we conduct research to provide concrete evidence that local peacebuilding works; we advocate to policymakers and other power-holders to increase investment in locally led peacebuilding; we run the peace journalism platform [Peace Insight](#), which showcases local peacebuilding; and we campaign to raise awareness of local peacebuilding and shift narratives about peace and conflict.

We also work to tackle unjust systems that undermine the possibility of a non-violent future. This includes research and advocacy to end racist, neocolonial practices prevalent across the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sector. In 2020, we launched [Time to Decolonise Aid](#), a landmark research report which catalysed conversation and action on decolonisation in our sector. Since then, we have played a leading role agitating for change and amplifying the voices of those marginalised by racism, and produced several [further guides and tools to decolonise our sector](#).

This work has not been externally focused. Peace Direct actively strives to embed inclusion and anti-racism within our organisation and our practices. We regularly evaluate the way we work with our partners, the way we run our organisation internally, and the way our teams communicate with the world – including assessing ourselves against the recommendations for decolonisation set out in our reports.

Website: www.peacedirect.org

Leadership team & wider staff: <https://www.peacedirect.org/about-us/our-people/>

FAQs for reporters

Where and when is Peace Connect?

13–17 October 2025 at Safari Park Hotel, Nairobi, Kenya.

What's the schedule?

Peace Connect runs from Monday 13 October to Friday 17 October. This includes four full days of the gathering itself, with workshops, lightning talks and much more.

The middle day (Wednesday 15 October) is a wellbeing day. Delegates are free to take the time to rest or there will be opportunities for excursions, including to a local peacebuilding project.

Can reporters secure a press pass?

We have a very limited number of press passes available, with set numbers of passes reserved for journalists from local outlets, from the UK, from international newswires, and from outlets focused on the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding sector.

We're looking for journalists who are willing to work with us to develop clear informed consent processes for interviewees and avoid re-traumatising questions to local peacebuilders.

To request a press pass, contact **Jennifer Venis**, Senior Communications Officer at Peace Direct, as soon as possible: Jennifer.venis@peacedirect.org.

Why is Peace Direct hosting this gathering? Why now?

Local peacebuilders need action, not words. For the past five years, governments and INGOs have committed to greater support for locally led peace, development and humanitarian work. But this rhetoric – promises to localise, bolster civil society networks and transform aid from charity to solidarity – has yet to turn into practice.

Funders still resist changing their approaches to increase funding to local peacebuilders and change practices rooted in racism-fuelled distrust of people in conflict-affected countries. Conflict analysis is still dominated by Global North think tanks and policy institutes, with local expertise ignored. And international convenings on peacebuilding and regional stabilisation still exclude local peacebuilders – whether deliberately or logistically, with all but one of the most prominent international peace conferences worldwide held in the Global North.

The exclusion of local peacebuilders in discussions about conflict resolution – their bread and butter – is one of the most visible manifestations of the legacy of colonialism in the peacebuilding, development and humanitarian sector.

We've created Peace Connect to disrupt these patterns, by creating a gathering that centres their voices and needs. We hope the event will contribute to:

- **Community and solidarity:** Peace Connect will create an inclusive space for peacebuilders from diverse backgrounds to come together and share experiences. Through curated and open-space sessions, we will facilitate meaningful networking opportunities, helping to build a united, global community of peacebuilders.
- **Visibility:** Peace Connect will elevate local peacebuilding efforts, which are often overlooked by the international community.
- **Collaboration:** By bringing together peacebuilders from conflict areas across the world, Peace Connect will create space for peacebuilders to engage in strategic conversations, explore solutions and strengthen collective efforts.
- **Reflection:** This gathering isn't just about networking; it's about learning. Thought leaders and local practitioners will share insights on the most pressing challenges in peacebuilding today. Together, we will reflect on new ideas, solutions, and opportunities for collective action.
- **Alliance-building:** Peace Connect will bring together established networks such as UNOY, GPPAC, ICAN, and #ShiftThePower, fostering collaboration across these movements. Participate in sessions curated by these networks to tackle key themes, including funding, tech, gender, youth, peace and security.
- **Wellbeing:** Peacebuilding is difficult and demanding work, and peacebuilders can face mental health challenges as a result. Peace Connect will offer self-care practices, resilience-building strategies, and psychological wellbeing support. We will create a space where peacebuilders can rest and recharge.

Who is coming to Peace Connect?

We hope 650 peacebuilders will attend Peace Connect. Approximately 80% of the tickets have been reserved for local peacebuilders, and most of these will be from the Global South. We will ensure diverse attendance from as many different conflict-affected contexts as possible. The remaining 20% of tickets have been reserved for Global North allies, including INGOs and donors.

Representatives of all of Peace Direct's local partners will attend. We have 27 local partners in 14 countries: Afghanistan, Burundi, Central African Republic, Colombia, DRC, Mali, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Somalia, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Syria, and Zimbabwe. You can learn more about their work here:

<https://www.peacedirect.org/our-partners/>.

We're also supporting Local Peacebuilding Experts and Correspondents we work with through the [Peace Insight journalism & mapping platform](#), as well as in other areas of work. These peacebuilders come from some of the same countries as our partners, but also from Kashmir, Lebanon, and Ukraine.

Is there a programme?

The programme is currently under development by an Advisory Group of local peacebuilders. We are also inviting attendees to co-create sessions, which will be selected from the open call and announced in July 2025.