

# The Struggle for Migrant Dignity in Greece

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Photo by Knut Bry Tinagent

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## Letter from the Editor

Dear CPT Community,

It has been a privilege to dedicate myself to CPT's work for the past two years. This will be my last newsletter, as I move on to serve justice in a new environment. I have begun a program to study Social Justice in Higher Education, and I am excited to become a part of a transformative movement that supports students of all kinds. I am also looking forward to continuing to be part of CPT moving forward, so this is by no means goodbye!

Thank you to all of you who follow CPT's work, and support us with your work, prayers, and contributions. I

also want to especially thank all of you who participated in our survey this summer. Amazingly, 357 people answered our request for responses! This gives us an amazing chance to hear your voices. We were delighted to learn more about you, and about what makes you value CPT. Below, I'd like to share a few highlights of what we learned about you.

### How do CPT's values reflect your personal values?

- Above all, we learned that you value our commitment to **embody creative non-violence and liberating love**. You ranked this as the most important value to you personally. We are glad to share with you the importance of finding a creative response to violence and oppression, beginning from a place of compassion and love!

### What stories do you want to hear?

- We asked you to tell us what you'd like to learn more about, in CPT's work. You told us that you are most interested in stories about **CPT's partners, CPTers themselves, and the daily life of our teams**. We hear you, and look forward to sharing more of these stories in our future news. Please tell us what you think!

### What else is important in CPT's work?

- Our readers strongly agreed that they care about CPT's commitment to **Undoing Oppressions**, and about **diversity in CPT**. We are so grateful to learn this: Undoing Oppressions is in many ways at the heart of our work, and how we relate to our partners. Knowing that you support and partner with us in our Undoing Oppressions journey is truly inspiring.

Thank you again, so much, for helping us to learn and grow. This will not be your last chance to share your voice with CPT. Together, let's work together to make Christian Peacemaker Teams the best it can be.



*Caitlin Light*

**PEACE,**  
CAITLIN LIGHT



Caption?

# CPT Introduces New Network for Indigenous Solidarity

**Christian Peacemaker Teams is excited to announce the creation of the Turtle Island Solidarity Network (TISN)!**

In March 2019, the full time Indigenous People’s Solidarity Team closed as a result of necessary budget cuts in CPT. However, CPT remains committed to continuing the work of Indigenous solidarity across Turtle Island (the Indigenous name for North America). In addition, we have been inspired by CPT reservists who are committed to decolonization. We would

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like to explore ways we can support reservists in this work and provide a platform for advocacy, opportunities for networking and shared learnings on Indigenous solidarity and decolonization.

The Turtle Island Solidarity Network is a network of CPT reservists who are engaged in Indigenous solidarity and decolonization. This network strives to take part in actions, be available for accompaniment, provide opportunities for education and advocacy, and work in coalition. By working together across Turtle Island, we strive to erase the colonial border between Canada and the US.

The creation of the network will enable reservists to network and include the advocacy they are already doing, as the work of CPT. At the same time, CPT will support reservists through networking calls and opportunities for advocacy. This will be a two-year pilot project to see how effective the network is.

The mandate of this group is to encourage Indigenous Solidarity within Christian Peacemaker Teams and our constituency through:

- Indigenous Solidarity (actions, events, accompaniment, petitions, and advocacy)
- Settler Education (Undoing Oppressions workshops, Resources on Dismantling the Doctrine of Discovery, and presentations to educate constituency)
- Coalition-building to support Indigenous rights and the struggles of our partners
- Undoing Settler Colonialism (providing guidance to the CPT body on how we can undo settler colonialism (including the Doctrine of Discovery and ideology of terra nullius) within our organization)

If you want to learn more about TISN or how your community can be involved, contact [canada@cpt.org](mailto:canada@cpt.org) for details. We are excited to welcome the CPT community to work with us in building a new network for transformative change!

## Shabbat at the Powwow

*By Rebecca Lash, CPT Delegate*

Over the sound of the powwow drum, two members of our delegation to Grassy Narrows First Nation led our group in Kabbalat Shabbat, a Jewish prayer service. We battled a growing swarm of mosquitoes and sang prayers while watching the powwow, as the sun set over the English-Wabigoon River. People of all ages, dressed in colorful regalia, took part in traditional dances and drumming. As the first interfaith Indigenous Peoples Solidarity delegation of Christian Peacemaker Teams, we welcomed the Jewish day of rest to mark the beginning of our journey together.

As Christians and Jews, we are participating in this delegation to wrestle with what it means to uphold treaty obligations, and to understand our role in solidarity work as non-Indigenous people. Through the first week, we reflected on the role of our respective religious traditions in facilitating colonization and white supremacy, and at the same time, how faith-based community motivates many of us to engage in activism. For Andrea, a non-Canadian delegation participant, Jesus' message of justice compels her to engage in solidarity work. She believes that the twofold nature of justice, including both healing for the oppressed and capacity for transformation of the oppressor, is central to Christ's message. For other delegates who are both Christian and Canadian, grappling with the church's role in the residential school system, and its intergenerational impacts on First Nations, are central to reflecting on holding a Christian faith while engaging in decolonization work.



*The first interfaith Indigenous Solidarity delegation. Photo by Julia Khair.*

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Unlike Christian participants, Jewish delegates are reflecting on Canada's role in providing a safe haven for Jews, especially after World War Two. My own grandparents are Holocaust survivors, and I think about the interconnected nature of holding both a refugee and a settler identity as a Canadian citizen. While Canada provided safety for my ancestors, I also benefit from resources taken from Indigenous peoples, that should be shared equitably under treaty rights. As a Canadian, I bring to this work a commitment to holding my government accountable to the treaties.

I joined this delegation to do my part in undoing legacies of colonialism by learning from Grassy Narrows community members, and by engaging in grassroots solidarity work. This has included tying tarps to the frame of a wigwam that will be used for an upcoming gathering of Indigenous women at Grassy Narrows. As I fixed twine to the wigwam frame, tiny fragments of dead leaves from the roof collected in the miniature copper pot necklace around my neck: a small symbol of water protection. The necklace was a gift for our group from elder Judy Da Silva, who has been a leader in Grassy Narrows' fight against logging expansion, during which time many CPT delegations were present to provide on-the-ground support.

In thinking about intercultural Indigenous solidarity work, Tiferet, a Jewish delegation participant, shares a teaching from the Talmud: "You are not obligated to complete the work, but neither are you free to desist from it." Bringing our cultural and religious identities to the forefront of our learning together permits a deeper level of authenticity in our engagement, and underlines the value of full cultural expression for all peoples. As we prayed in Hebrew over the sound of the powwow drum, the importance of bringing our full selves into solidarity work had never felt so resonant.

# The Struggle for Migrant Dignity in Greece

By CPT Lesbos

In March 2019, the Greek Syriza government's Ministry of Migration (MoM) announced that financial assistance and accommodation for recognized refugees would be cut after a six month "grace period." This decision was the result of the full implementation of the Emergency Support to Integration and Accommodation program, which, according to the MoM, had always been intended as a temporary measure, but had until this point been provided for as long as necessary, as a gesture of goodwill.

The MoM describe the policy as allowing the "emancipation" and "empowerment" of recognized refugees. When it was announced, the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) welcomed the scheme as something that would "strengthen refugee integration" and "support refugees in accessing gainful employment." The policy provided no program for achieving this. Instead it relied upon the assumption that state assistance leads to a population dependent on welfare.

The new policy, they claimed, would facilitate a journey from dependence to independence, "liberating" refugees through poverty, despite removing structural safeguards guaranteeing housing and basic financial assistance. All of this was meant to function in an economy recovering from EU-imposed austerity, in which almost one fifth of the population is unemployed.

The policy announcement led to scenes of desperation, as migrants who received word of the impending cuts decided to gather on the northern border and attempt to cross, only to be beaten back by police. Workers for NGOs providing housing for migrants, who would be forced to evict those they sought to help, went on strike. Concerned NGO workers, at a meeting on Lesbos, spoke of being forced to contradict their ethics, of being made complicit in doing the state's dirty work.

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State housing for recognized refugees was already inadequate before the cuts were announced. In Athens, a network of "solidarity squats" (communal housing set up in abandoned buildings, with no official funding) was established, allowing migrants to live in dignity with their communities. The true character of the MoM's policy has been laid bare through a tandem series of migrant squat evictions. Even as the state pulled the rug from under migrants by removing funding, it undermined the solidarity movement's attempt to cushion their fall.

Where the Syriza government pitched this policy under the idea of migrant "empowerment," the far-right New Democracy government, which has now claimed power in Greece, encourages the pre-existing link between migration and crime in the public consciousness. They have given further jurisdiction over migration to the police. At the time of writing, the New Democracy government plans to clear out migrant squats housing over 1,000 people from Athens by the end of the month.

Although the claim is that they are targeting "mafia syndicates" within the squats, this August photographers documented two migrant squat evictions in which 144 people, among them families with children, were rounded onto buses and sent to camps, some forced to sleep in the open air. One child allegedly lost a tooth after a police officer pushed them. As anti-racist thinker A. Sivanandan wrote in relation to Europe's policy of deporting migrant children, "[Children] are the measure of our possibilities; how we treat them is the measure of our humanity. The moment we



categorize them as foreign is the moment we lose both.”

Lesvos is a landing point for thousands of migrants per year, making the journey from Africa and the Middle East. They live a hand-to-mouth existence, stuck for the most part in Moria, one of Europe’s most squalid camps. This August, Moria’s capacity of 3,000 people has been stretched beyond breaking point, to accommodate at least 11,000. At least 6,000 people have failed to receive medical screenings due to a shortage of medical staff.

Because “improved” accommodation is scarce, migrants are forced to battle it out in a race to the bottom. Only the most “vulnerable”

qualify for a better living situation, forcing people into a pantomime of victimhood. In this way, the impoverished infrastructure creates the same dependency that the state claims further funding cuts would eliminate. “We are like babies,” one man living in Moria told CPT Lesvos. “We are grateful for anything we get.”

Yet, despite attempts to squeeze the life from it, a community of resistance survives. While the island’s NGO industry wrings funding from human suffering to blunt the harshest edges of European policies, our partners foreground working not for migrants, but with them, in pursuit of a dignified life for all. Together they focus on the personal, reclaiming a degree of power over their daily lives.

All the while, they maintain an eye on the structural concerns, tackling issues of racism, homophobia and poverty ingrained in the asylum and criminal justice systems. While policy makers in the European Union attempt to establish Moria camp as the expression of Europe’s soul, the solidarity movement continues working with migrants in their struggle to transform it. CPT is proud to be a partner in this life-changing work.



*Photo by Knut Bry Tinagent.*

# **“We will start all over again.” Palestinians Face a Surge of Home Demolitions**

*By CPT Palestine*

Early in the morning on 22 July, more than 1,000 Israeli soldiers and government workers arrived in Sur Bahir, in the southern area of East Jerusalem, and began the process of demolishing 70 Palestinian homes. Along with the sheer magnitude, this home demolition was particularly concerning because the Palestinian homeowners had permission to build from the Palestinian Authority; Sur Bahir is located in Area A, which is exclusively under Palestinian administration. These demolitions could set a dangerous precedent.

Home demolitions violate universal human rights and attack the most basic necessity of any family: the need to have shelter and a place to call one's own. The Israeli Occupying Forces have a practice of not only demolishing family dwellings, but also the surrounding infrastructure, including schools, water cisterns, and community centers.

During July, Israeli forces carried out six demolitions in the greater Hebron area, according to the Hebron Freedom Fund. On 10 July, Israeli bulldozers demolished a caravan in Idhna, a village just west of Hebron, claiming that the caravan was too close to Israel's apartheid wall – the same reason given for the massive demolitions in Sur Bahir. On 13 July, the Israeli military raided areas of H1 Hebron (which is under Palestinian Authority control), put up mobile checkpoints, and delivered a home demolition order notice to Mohammed Ali Al-Allami, even though Mohammed had all of the necessary legal documents for his home construction. On 16 July, Israeli forces demolished an irrigation pool that the Ziad al-Jabari family used to water their crops in H2 Hebron, next to the Kiryat Arba Israeli settlement.

CPT recently followed-up with brothers Bara' and Lafa al-Rajabi, whose home (in the Jabal Johar neighborhood of Hebron) was demolished by Israeli forces in June. “We have been here before,” they explained. Israeli military forces destroyed one of their large dairy farms 17 years ago. In the face of this crisis, the brothers noted their good fortune compared with many other Palestinians who face demolitions; at least they still have their original home to live in, overcrowded though it

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is. The family is not homeless, and they still have each other.

However, one of their main challenges is that after placing all of their savings into the construction project, the family now has no money left to pay the bill that Israeli authorities presented for the demolition. “We will start all over again,” they told CPT. “But this time, we will save up for some of the more expensive land in Area A. We will make sure this doesn't happen to us again.”

Demolitions have long been a tool of Israeli settler colonialism. According to the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions (ICAHD), Israeli Occupying Forces have demolished over 49,000 structures since 1967. Since 2006, Israeli authorities have demolished at least 1,440 residential units across the West Bank, causing 6,336 Palestinians to become homeless. The rate of demolitions has been increasing, according to UN-OCHA, with Israeli forces demolishing over 201 structures in Palestinian communities and displacing 295 people since the beginning of 2019. The rate of demolitions increased significantly in 2016, with Israeli forces demolishing an average of 14 structures monthly.





*Caption?*

The highest number of demolitions ever recorded in one month was when Israeli forces demolished 63 homes and other structures in April 2019. The most common reason given by Israeli authorities for demolitions is the absence of a building permit or license to build. However, sometimes demolitions are collective punishment for what Israeli authorities deem criminal behavior of a family member. The erratic patterns of these demolitions indicates their true purpose: to disrupt the daily life of Palestinians, until it becomes unlivable. CPT will continue to be present with their partners in Palestine, to raise their voices and stand with them as they resist the violence of Occupation.



## Having Coffee with Laura Serrano Vecino of the OFP

By Juliane Assmann, CPT Colombia

“We did not bury them, we planted them.”

This is a phrase you’ll encounter when walking through the *Casa de la Memoria y de los Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres* (The House of Memory and of the Human Rights of Women). Black, purple and white dominate the space. A tree with the names of all of the assassinated women leaders, and a black gown with the words of the anthem of the Organización Femenina Popular (OFP), evoke immediate associations and emotions. Illustrations depict the history of the women’s struggle for survival, respect and peace in Colombia.

Laura Serrano Vecino

who has been working for the OFP since 2014. “Being a region with such wide social unrest as well as political, social, and armed conflicts has generated a response from civil society mobilizations.

“The images of women in contexts of conflict say that women are widows, mothers, partners. And yes, they are all that in the unfortunate dimensions of the conflict. But here they have been political agents who have assumed the leading role of defending life and human rights.”

I asked Laura how she understands feminism. “From my experience I have had the opportunity of awakening my consciousness as a woman, my gender awareness,” she said. “That implies understanding that there are particular situations that affect me, and I say it as a woman who has privileges, who grew up in a city, who is not a racialized woman, who had the opportunity to go to university.

“The situation of a popular, racialized woman is not the same as for a woman with alternative political ideas. So how can I work in this context and not identify as a feminist? It would be a contradiction. I would not help much if I said that I am a feminist but at the same time I am racist, because then I am not understanding the situation of racialized women. Or if I was a feminist and a classist. Or if I was a xenophobic feminist. Feminism gives me a slightly more integral look at all these inequalities and has led me to want to transform them.”

I come from a German context. As I observe it, the intersectionality of different forms of oppressions and the structural character of violence seem to be much more obvious to people in Colombia than in countries of “the global North.” It became apparent again while listening to Laura as we sat in an office of the OFP house in the Barrio Primero de Mayo, which is one of the historically eventful districts in Barranca with respect to the conflict, mobilization and social movements.

“The gap between the countryside and the city here in Colombia is quite decisive,” Laura told me. “It is quite wide due to the high levels of poverty that exist in the countryside, or the high level of discrimination against women in the countryside, in terms of political representation, on issues of access to services, access to education. And also because they are regions where patriarchal culture

is deeply rooted in everyday practices.“

Laura herself is part of OFP's training team. She prepares methodologies and runs analyses. Right now they are initiating a memory project that identifies specific risks of women in the framework of post-conflict Colombia, and plans the construction of collective protection routes.

Laura shared with me about the importance of CPT in this context. “The international community becomes a guarantor of the actions that can be taken to demand the implementation of the peace agreements. Our companions tell us that when they made these commissions to go look for the bodies [of assassinated or disappeared persons], or to go rescuing young people who were going to be kidnapped by paramilitaries, the accompaniment was always a guarantee of protection for them. The accompaniment of organizations such as CPT is fundamental because it is what allows the organization to reaffirm its position, to shield itself a little in the face of these attacks and accusations.”

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In Laura's words, none of the assassinated women have been lost to the nothingness of death. None of them are forgotten. But indeed they have become seeds of hope and resistance, being planted into the collective mind and memory of the women in Colombia, of the next generation rising up. These seedlings are breaking out into the open now, sprouting in projects like the House of Memory, lifting up many more women and encouraging them to shape the history of Colombia with their hands, voices and minds.

If you want to help us to continue being a guarantor of civilian ways of peacebuilding, if you want to strengthen women's rights, if you want to support Laura's work, please support us with a donation!

**To learn more about the OFP (in Spanish), follow their Facebook and Instagram (@casamemoria.mujeres), and visit their blog and youtube playlist.**

**<http://organizacionfemeninapopular.blogspot.com/p/inicio.html>**

**<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PL4BBI6A5CII2A5D42>**





*Caption?*

## **CPT Colombia Calls for Hope on the Road to Peace**

*By CPT Colombia*

**On 29 August, Colombia awoke to a Youtube video of former FARC commanders announcing that they have decided to return to arms. Some of those in the video were the same ones who took part in the negotiations for the Peace Agreement finalized in 2016. In response, Christian Peacemaker Teams Colombia has signed on to a Declaration calling once again for peace. The text of their declaration follows below.**

As churches, national and international civil society organizations, collectives, initiatives and citizens in general, we are concerned about the continuous obstacles put forth to prevent the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement. Our prayer and commitment is and will continue to be with the churches, the victims of the armed conflict, the population that reincorporated into civilian life, women, children, young conscientious objectors and all those who dream and long for a reconciled and peaceful Colombia. With hope we proclaim that neither death, nor threats, nor wars can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:37).

In this biblical spirit and in accordance with what we have wagered on peace, we regret the announcement made by ex-combatants of the former FARC-EP lead by Luciano Marín to take up arms in order to achieve political and social change.

The implementation of the Final Peace Agreement has not been an easy process, nor has it advanced as much as Colombians would like almost three years after its signing. However, this cannot be an excuse to take up arms again because our commitment as a society must be the

construction of peace from a position of respect for life and human rights.

Given this fact, which seeks to break down the efforts of Colombians trying to overcome the wounds caused by the armed conflict, the undersigned

**INVITE** the churches, socio-ecclesial communities, human rights defenders and social organizations not to faint, to express ourselves in the efforts for the construction of peace in our country, to see God through the eyes of the victims and to remember the [past] achievements at building peace throughout the country.

**WE BELIEVE** that peace is the fruit of social justice (Isaiah 32:17). We need to overcome the causes that generate exclusion, strengthen a democratic culture and embrace the paths of reconciliation, founded on dialogue and the positive transformation of social conflicts.

**WE SUPPORT** the reconciliation and healing process carried out by the ex-combatants who have chosen legal approaches as the only means to build a country in peace.

**WE REITERATE** our call to the State to guarantee the implementation of the Final Peace Agreement and we invite all citizens to accompany the process of [ex-combatants'] reincorporation into civilian life to guarantee that the process is done in compliance with what was agreed.

**WE EXHORT** the armed actors to cease all intimidating actions and respect the life and dignity of every person because we are Sons and Daughters of God. Life is sacred and therefore, we reject the use of any type of violence that limits the multiple efforts of building a society.

**WE MAKE AN URGENT CALL** to pray for the peace of Colombia and mobilize in favor of the efforts of those who seek truth, justice, comprehensive reparation of the victims and non-repetition of the acts of violence.

Visit <https://tinyurl.com/peace-declaration> to see the list organizations that have signed the declaration.

# Shepherding Peace

*By CPT Iraqi Kurdistan*

As villagers from Bagova led CPT down the road, we were all keenly aware of the large Turkish outpost lined with razor wire and bunkers of sandbags looming just over the next hill to the left. We were also aware of the large mountain to the right, a suspected area of operations for the PKK. We scanned the hilltops for military movement, but it wasn't until we stopped that we noticed the young boy tending his family's sheep in the field between these two forces. This was the exact same spot he was in three weeks earlier, unnoticed by fighter jets, as Turkish bombs rained down.

On June 7th, 2019, an armed clash between the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) and Turkish soldiers stationed at a Turkish outpost near Zakho, Iraqi Kurdistan broke out. As a response, the Turkish military sent planes and drones to bomb the surrounding hills and valleys. The bombs sent



*Aihan was looking after his family's flock of sheep when the Turkish bombing began.*

deadly shrapnel flying throughout the area. The impact caused windows to break in neighboring villages.

Aihan, 13 years old, was with his mother tending to their flock of sheep that day. When the Turkish Air Force began to bomb, they were trapped on the side of the mountain. Aihan told CPT that they made their way as fast as they could, with their herd, down to the main road. He was so terrified by the falling bombs that he passed out in the field.

Aihan's father, Kak Sanhan, hurried to drive from their home in Bagova to help his family escape. Kak Sanhan told CPT that as they began to flee the area, a bomb fell near their truck. The explosion killed 72 of their animals and forced their truck off the road, where it flipped over four times. Kak Sanhan's wife, Shems Khan, was badly injured as the truck rolled. She had a severe wound on her head requiring several stitches, and sustained injuries to her arm. Three weeks later, Shems's injuries were still visible.

Residents of four neighboring villages spoke to CPT on 20 June. In this area, villagers sustain their incomes by raising cattle. All the villagers had stories of shepherds being stuck in fields during Turkish bombings, animals being killed, and people sheltering behind rocks.

"We only need peace," one man told CPT. Every villager either said that the Turkish outpost needed to be moved, or that the PKK needed to leave. All the villagers agreed on one thing: that a diplomatic and peaceful agreement needs to be reached soon.

Kak Sanhan added, "Until we have peace, we can not live comfortably."





*A local villager pointing out an area that is frequently bombed.*

**Want to experience CPT's work firsthand, and meet with our amazing partners?**

**Consider joining a delegation in 2020!**

Delegation participation is the first step to becoming a CPTer, or just a chance to learn more about the contexts in which our partners work to resist violence and oppression, and how CPT plays a vital role. Every year, CPT offers a selection of 7-14 day delegations to:

- Colombia
- Canada (Indigenous Peoples Solidarity)
- Iraqi Kurdistan
- Palestine/Israel
- US/Mexico Borderlands

2020 dates will be posted soon. Visit [cpt.org/delegations](https://cpt.org/delegations) to learn more.



Every year, since 2012, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico & Douglas, Arizona, US, hold a Concert Without Borders to promote cross cultural understanding. Through music, they seek to break down barriers that divide us.

The performances happen directly opposite one another, but are coordinated as such to perform together or take turns performing. The event includes music and dance performances, art walks, activities for children, and more. CPT was able to accompany migrants here in Agua Prieta to see their children perform, and have a night of enjoyment amidst their ongoing search for a safe life.

CPT's presence offers safety and witness to threatened and displaced communities around the world. Will you partner with us in this time of crisis?

To learn how to participate in a CPT delegation, become a CPTer, or support us financially, visit [cpt.org](http://cpt.org) or email us at [peacemakers@cpt.org](mailto:peacemakers@cpt.org). And thank you for keeping CPT and our partners in your thoughts and prayers!



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- Congregation of St. Basil (the Basilians)
- Presbyterian Peace Fellowship
- Das Deutsche Mennonitische Friedenskomitee

## **BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS TO TRANSFORM VIOLENCE AND OPPRESSION**

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Every year, since 2012, Agua Prieta, Sonora, Mexico & Douglas, Arizona, US, hold a Concert Without Borders to promote cross cultural understanding. Through music, they seek to break down barriers that divide us.

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