



**UNAOC**  
United Nations Alliance of Civilizations

**IN FOCUS**

ISSUE #8 | WINTER 2021



## **UNAOC and IOM Celebrate Youth Filmmakers Around the World at First-Ever PLURAL+ Virtual Awards Ceremony**

*2020 marks the twelfth anniversary of PLURAL+, and on that occasion, UNAOC and IOM announced the creation of two new award categories, thus providing even more opportunities for young filmmakers around the world to be recognized for their creative visions.*

# IN THIS ISSUE

- 03**    **UNAOC and IOM Celebrate Youth Filmmakers Around the World at First-Ever PLURAL+ Virtual Awards Ceremony**
- 05**    **PLURAL+ Youth Media Makers Against Racism**
- 06**    **The 6th Edition of the Intercultural Innovation Award Goes Online Amid Covid-19**
- 07**    **Spotlight on Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients**
- 12**    **UNAOC Alumni Participate in Annual UNAOC High-Level Group of Friends Meeting**
- 13**    **UNAOC Alumni Gather Online to Celebrate World Day for Cultural Diversity**
- 13**    **UNAOC Alumni Participate in Side Event on UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security**
- 14**    **Young Peacebuilders: Humanity is One...and Young**
- 17**    **Preventing Violent Extremism through Education**
- 20**    **Youth Leadership and Action for a Better World**
- 21**    **Youth Bridging Differences through Sport**
- 23**    **Media and Information Literacy reinforced amid Covid-19**
- 24**    **Global Communications Campaign #forSafeWorship**
- 25**    **Amid Covid-19, the Fellowship Programme Goes Online**
- 28**    **UNAOC Fellowship Alumni Event: “Building Peace and Fostering Social Cohesion in the Age of New Media”**
- 29**    **Joint UNAOC-KAICIID Small Grant Programme**
- 30**    **News Generation Against Hate: Empowering Local Youth to Create Alternative Narratives and Champion Diversity in the Media**
- 31**    **Celebrating the 5th Anniversary of UNSC Resolution 2250**



# UNAOC and IOM Celebrate Youth Filmmakers Around The World At First-Ever Plural+ Virtual Awards Ceremony



“

*“This year, we received more than 500 videos from more than 70 countries. That is yet another proof of youth’s resilience and strength, even during challenging times. Their conviction that the world can and should be a better place, and their creative vision in addressing the pressing social issues of migration, social inclusion, diversity, and xenophobia, are the essence behind the production of these inspiring and thought-provoking short films.”*

**Mr. Miguel Ángel Moratinos, High Representative for UNAOC**

2020 marked the twelfth anniversary of the **PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival**, a joint initiative of UNAOC and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) that invites every year young people to submit original and creative short films focusing on the themes of migration, diversity, social inclusion, and the prevention of xenophobia.

Despite the global pandemic, PLURAL+ received

more than 450 submissions from more than 70 countries. UNAOC and IOM held the annual PLURAL+ awards ceremony in December, which took place virtually for the first time. The High Representative for UNAOC, Mr. Miguel Moratinos, and the Director General of IOM, Mr. António Vitorino, both participated in the event, as well as Under-Secretary-General for Global Communications Mrs. Melissa Fleming.

“Young people’s conviction that the world can and should be a better place, and their creative vision in addressing the pressing social issues of migration, social inclusion, diversity, and xenophobia, are the essence behind the production of these inspiring and thought-provoking PLURAL+ short films,” said Mr. Moratinos, in his opening remarks.

The Awards Ceremony opened with a musical performance by internationally-acclaimed Spanish musician Mr. Rafael Aguirre, followed by the screening

of the winning PLURAL+ videos. Members of the International Jury then announced the names of the winners. In 2020, the international jury included Ms. Nayeli Chavez-Geller (New York Correspondent, Primer Impacto, Univisión), Mr. John Yearwood (Deputy Editor, Politico), Ms. Thuraya Ismail (Secretary General, Mentor Arabia), Ms. Louise Kanza (Co-Founder, Sophie A. Kanza Foundation), Mr. José Antonio Bautista (Investigative Journalist), and Ms. Sophia Kianni (UN Youth Advisor on Climate Change).

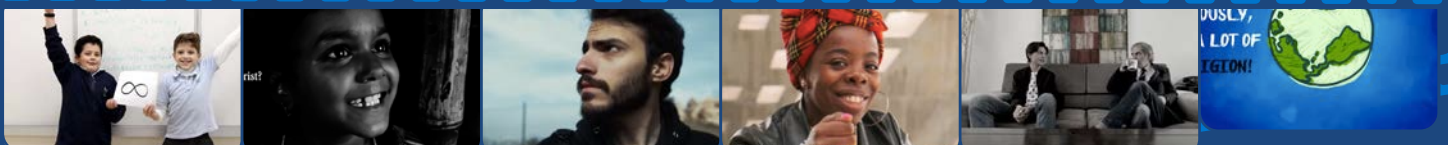
## 2020 Youth Video Festival Winners

The winners in the up to 12 years old category were **Hashem Hamed** and **Omar Al-Jallad**, of **Jordan**, for their film **“Islam and Math”**, in which they speak about their love for maths and how they wish society would be as fair and logical as math equations, instead of discriminating against certain groups, especially Muslims.

The winner in the 13 to 17 category was **Kulsoom Rizavi**, of **India**, for the film **“Who is a Refugee?”**, which explores the many labels used against refugees and migrants.

The winner in the 18 to 25 category was **Bayan Abutaema**, of **Jordan**, for the film **“ERROR 017”**, which tackles the issues of exclusion and discrimination.

The UNAOC-IOM Award for the Prevention of Xenophobia went to **“The Mask I Don’t Want to Wear”** by João Maciel, of Brazil, which explores the issues of racism and discrimination against minorities.



To view all PLURAL+ winning videos, visit [www.pluralplus.unaoc.org](http://www.pluralplus.unaoc.org).

“

*“We need to have more empathy, and we need to make the whole world aware of this through art and education.”*

**Mr. João Pedro Maciel (Brazil)**

**Recipient of the 2020 PLURAL+ Special Award  
for the Prevention of Xenophobia**





# New PLURAL+ Awards Categories

In 2020, UNAOC and IOM announced two new award categories, thus providing even more opportunities for young filmmakers around the world to be recognized for their creative visions.

Entitled **"The Future We Want"**, the first new award category invited young filmmakers to submit videos focusing on the future of migration, diversity, social inclusion, and the prevention of xenophobia. It was created in the context of the UN's 75th anniversary and the organization's efforts to foster a global conversation on the role of global cooperation in building the future we want. The new award went to **"Dear Society: A Queer Message"** by **Diego Casillas**, of Mexico, in which he shares his dream of an inclusive society where all individuals would be free and accepted by all, regardless of their differences.

The second new category, the **#forSafeWorship Award**, invited youth to express their views and perspectives on fostering peaceful co-existence between religions and faiths. It was created in the context of the **UN Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites**, developed by UNAOC, and launched in September 2019. The award went to **"Religion is Love"** by **Marcos Magalhães** of Brazil, in which he emphasizes that all religions carry a message of love and unity and invites the viewer to stand #forSafeWorship.

The remaining **twenty-five finalists** received awards from the many **partner organizations of PLURAL+**. The winning PLURAL+ videos are now available on the PLURAL+ website ([pluralplus.unaoc.org](http://pluralplus.unaoc.org)) and are distributed worldwide.

## PLURAL+ Youth Media Makers Against Racism

Throughout the year, amid the global pandemic, UNAOC and IOM organized a series of online events to encourage young people to submit short films to the Festival. In June 2020, in the context of rising tensions worldwide, UNAOC and IOM notably organized a virtual watch party entitled **"PLURAL+ Youth Media Makers Against Racism"**. The virtual event featured a selection of PLURAL+ films, which all convey a strong message of unity against racism and all forms of discrimination.

"Racism is an affront to universal human values and rights. We need to stand up collectively and peacefully against racism as one humanity towards a society free of discrimination," Mr. Moratinos said during the event.

With the **PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival**, UNAOC and IOM address objectives 16 and 17 of the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration (GCM) by empowering migrants and societies to realize full inclusion and social cohesion, and promoting evidence-based public discourse to



shape perceptions of migration. With increasing interest and participation each year, PLURAL+ has become a premier global platform for youth media distribution.

# The 6th Edition of the Intercultural Innovation Award Goes Online Amid Covid-19



Launched in 2011, the **Intercultural Innovation Award (IIA)**, a partnership between the **United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)** and **BMW Group**, selects and supports innovative grassroots projects that encourage intercultural dialogue and work toward a more peaceful and socially inclusive world by building mutual respect among peoples of different cultural and religious identities, rejecting violent extremism and embracing diversity. To date, the project has supported more than 60 organizations in over 110 countries.

Shortly after the **6th edition of the IIA Ceremony**, which took place in **Madrid, Spain**, in December 2019, the global pandemic occurred, leading UNAOC and BMW Group to organize all IIA activities online. Over the span of nine months, the 2019 IIA recipients received training in a series of webinars touching on a multitude of topics and received one-on-one coaching sessions.

Topics included:

- *"Fundraising in the face of Covid-19: Donor Networking and Creating Lasting Relationships";*
- *"Public Speaking for Effective Communication";*
- *"Social Styles and Leadership";*
- *"Organizational Sustainability and Growth";*
- *"Designing and Cultivating an Organizational Culture of Commitment and Performance";*
- *"Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning";*
- *"Implementing Change and Creating Impact Within and Outside your Organization"*

The virtual capacity-building workshops, organized by UNAOC and BMW Group with the support of Accenture and a pool of experts, provided IIA recipients with tools and knowledge to strengthen their skills and increase the impact of their projects.



# Spotlight on Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients

## President Emmanuel Macron of France Meets with IIA Recipient Arcenciel in Lebanon



Amid the global pandemic, **Arcenciel (2014 IIA recipient)** organized numerous webinars in partnership with the Lebanese Red Cross and other organizations to discuss the implementation of practices to protect the safety and health of employees.

Moreover, since a devastating explosion hit Beirut on 4 August 2020, leaving 300,000 people home-

less, 6,000+ injured, and 200+ dead, Arcenciel has been one of the leading organizations in Lebanon to provide paramedic and technical aid, donating food, and much more.

On 1 September 2020, President Emmanuel Macron of France visited Arcenciel to commend the organization's work.

## Grassroots Reconciliation Group in Uganda Featured by UN Verified Campaign

2019 IIA recipient **Grassroots Reconciliation Group / GRG (2019 IIA recipient)** has been tackling the spread of false information related to Covid-19 in Uganda. Ms. Magdalen Amony, Program and Country Director at GRG, was featured by Verified, a global UN initiative aimed at delivering trusted information, life-saving advice and stories from the best of humanity. She spoke about her experience working to counter the spread of Covid-19 misinformation.

Watch it here: [facebook.com/watch/?v=300769931108067](https://facebook.com/watch/?v=300769931108067)



## Spotlight on Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients



### Founder and CEO of 180 Grad Wende in Germany Receives Prestigious Award

Mr. Mimoun Berrissoun, Founder and CEO of **180 Grad Wende (2019 IIA recipient)**, received the Mevlüde-Genç medal from the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia for his social work and commitment to fighting radicalization.

## All Together Now Publishes Report on Racism

**All Together Now (2014 IIA recipient)**, a racial equity organization based in Australia, has monitored national mainstream media for racial bias since 2016. Soon after the Covid-19 pandemic reached the country, racist incidents against people of Asian descent increased significantly. All Together Now worked with the Asian Australian Alliance to make data-based observations showing how mainstream media's social commentators have taken advantage of the pandemic to perpetuate racism and encourage division. In doing so, All Together Now sought to raise racial literacy for readers to critically analyze social commentary and push for reforms in the media industry. While the study is being conducted in Australia, it has broad relevance for other countries. *The Guardian* wrote about the report in a November 2020 article.

A copy of the findings is available here: [alltogethernow.org.au/media-monitoring/](https://alltogethernow.org.au/media-monitoring/)



## More than One Story in Sweden Launches New Website and Participates in the Social Innovation Summit and the SIETAR Switzerland Congress

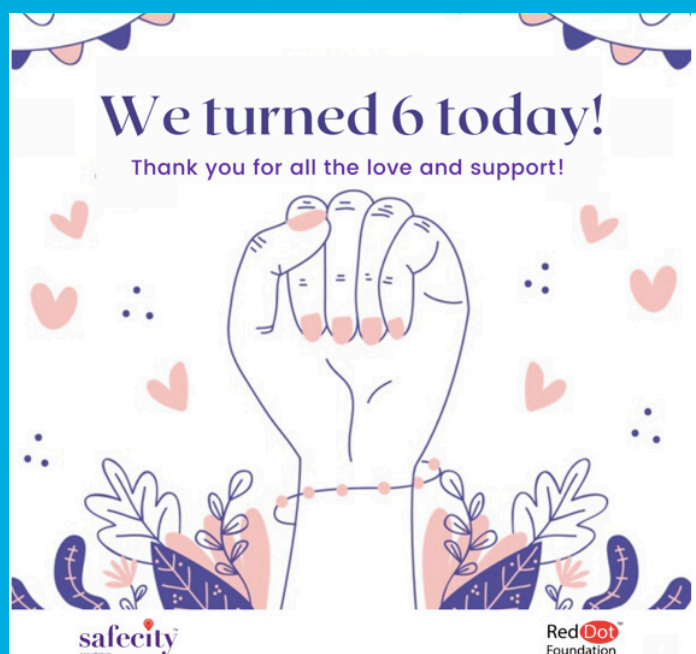


The **More Than One Story project (2014 IIA recipient)** launched a brand-new website in September 2020 that has already been visited by more than 2,500 people. People can now access the organization's card game, which helps build bridges between people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures.

The More Than One Story team was invited to present the card game at two international conferences with participants from more than 50 countries, the Social Innovation Summit and the SIETAR Switzerland Congress, both in November 2020.



## Safe City's Red Dot Foundation Celebrates 6th Year Anniversary of Making Cities Safer for Women and Girls



**Safe City (2016 IIA recipient)** is a project based in India and the United States that works to prevent sexual and gender-based violence through the use of crowdsourced data and technology. In 2020, amid Covid-19, they started receiving calls and messages from victims of domestic violence. This compelled the organization to take the following measures:

- Add domestic violence as a category for reporting on their crowdsourced map.
- Partner with other nonprofit organizations for Legal and Counselling support for victims and survivors.
- Start Safe Circle, a weekly online peer-support group.
- Filed a Public Interest Litigation in the Supreme Court of India to declare domestic violence prevention services as “essential”.
- Launched a change.org petition to raise public awareness about the lack of domestic violence prevention and response services, which gathered 30,000 signatures.

On top of all these activities, in October 2020, Safe City celebrated its 6th anniversary of making cities safer for women and girls.

## Grassroots Reconciliation Group in Uganda Launches Fundraising Campaign to Help South Sudanese Refugees Amid Covid-19

Amid Covid-19, South Sudanese refugees and remote communities were some of the hardest-hit groups in northern Uganda due to inadequate healthcare infrastructure and poor living conditions. Their food rations were cut by 30 percent while travel restrictions limited essential contact with NGOs, as well as local markets and farmland. For community members, vital protective provisions did not reach their remote locations and left them stranded during a flooding crisis.

**Grassroots Reconciliation Group / GRG (2019 IIA recipient)** launched an online fundraising campaign to support these at-risk communities, which raised more than \$4,000 of donations from across the globe. GRG distributed the funds while implementing their peacebuilding and psychosocial activities. Moreover, GRG distributed farming tools to increase agricultural output and 640 kilograms of seeds to more than 1,500 refugees and other community members. This unique blend of psychosocial and socio-economic approaches to peacebuilding, which encourages joint livelihood projects, maximizes social integration, and builds mutual trust between diverse groups.



## Spotlight on Intercultural Innovation Award Recipients

### Indika Foundation in Indonesia Helps Raise \$5.6 million for Covid-19 Relief Initiatives



Amid the Covid-19 pandemic, **Indika Foundation (2019 IIA recipient)** helped raise \$5.6 million to aid the most affected communities in Indonesia. The organization worked with more than twenty organizations, reaching grassroots level to distribute food, masks, hand sanitizers, and other essential items. Indika Foundation also started a testing center, giving people access to affordable Covid-19 tests.

### MinorMatters in Sri Lanka Launches Digital Citizenship Toolkit



The **Alliance Development Trust (ADT)** and its project **MinorMatters: Rewind; Rebuild (2019 IIA recipient)** launched a Digital Citizenship Toolkit (DCT) to equip and encourage younger generations to make better, smarter, and more ethical choices online. The Digital Citizen social media page is routinely updated and serves to engage an ever-growing audience.

Through this initiative, the ADT hopes to ignite interest in youth and adults alike to become ethical and responsible digital citizens. The ADT is also in the process of partnering with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Education, the National Youth Services Council, and other local entities to ensure the digital citizen campaign and resources reach a vast number of people in Sri Lanka.





## Wapikoni from Canada Launches International Symposium on Indigenous Languages

To mark the announcement by the United Nations of the International Decade of Indigenous Languages starting in 2022, **Wapikoni (2014 IIA recipient)** and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO (CCUNESCO), in partnership with the Canadian Museum of History, organized an International Symposium on Indigenous Languages. Held on 11 February 2020 at the Canadian Museum of History in Gatineau, Quebec, the symposium aimed to reflect collectively on the promotion, safeguarding and revitalization of Indigenous languages by presenting cultural, media and political arts initiatives from around the world. The symposium featured the participation of the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, Mr. Perry Bellegarde, and Mrs. Tarcila Rivera Zea, a designated member of the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

## Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen in El Salvador Wins Ibermuseums Education Award

The main cooperation program for Ibero-American Museums announced on 17 September 2020 that the **Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen in El Salvador (2019 IIA recipient)**, with its project From the Pandemic to Hope, is one of the twenty winners of the 11th Ibermuseums Education Award, which recognizes the educational role of Ibero-American museums. The Museo de la Palabra y la Imagen's proposal was chosen among more than 200 projects from 16 countries.



## Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom holds 7th Annual Gathering online: "Together, We Rise"



On 15 November 2020, the **Sisterhood of Salaam Shalom (2019 IIA recipient)**, an organization that works to build relationships between Muslim and Jewish women and girls, held a virtual Conference entitled, "Together We Rise", aimed at overcoming divisiveness in society, pursuing justice and peacefully responding to hate. The 600 women and girls who participated were energized and ready to take action after listening to the keynote presenters, civil rights attorney Ms. Raheemah Abdulaleem and Ms. Yavilah McCoy, CEO of the diversity consulting group DIMENSIONS Inc.





## UNAOC Alumni Participate in Annual UNAOC High-Level Group of Friends Meeting

In September 2020, UNAOC convened its annual **High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends** on the theme **“Shaping a Better World: Building Cohesive and Inclusive Societies in a Challenging Covid-19 Environment”**.

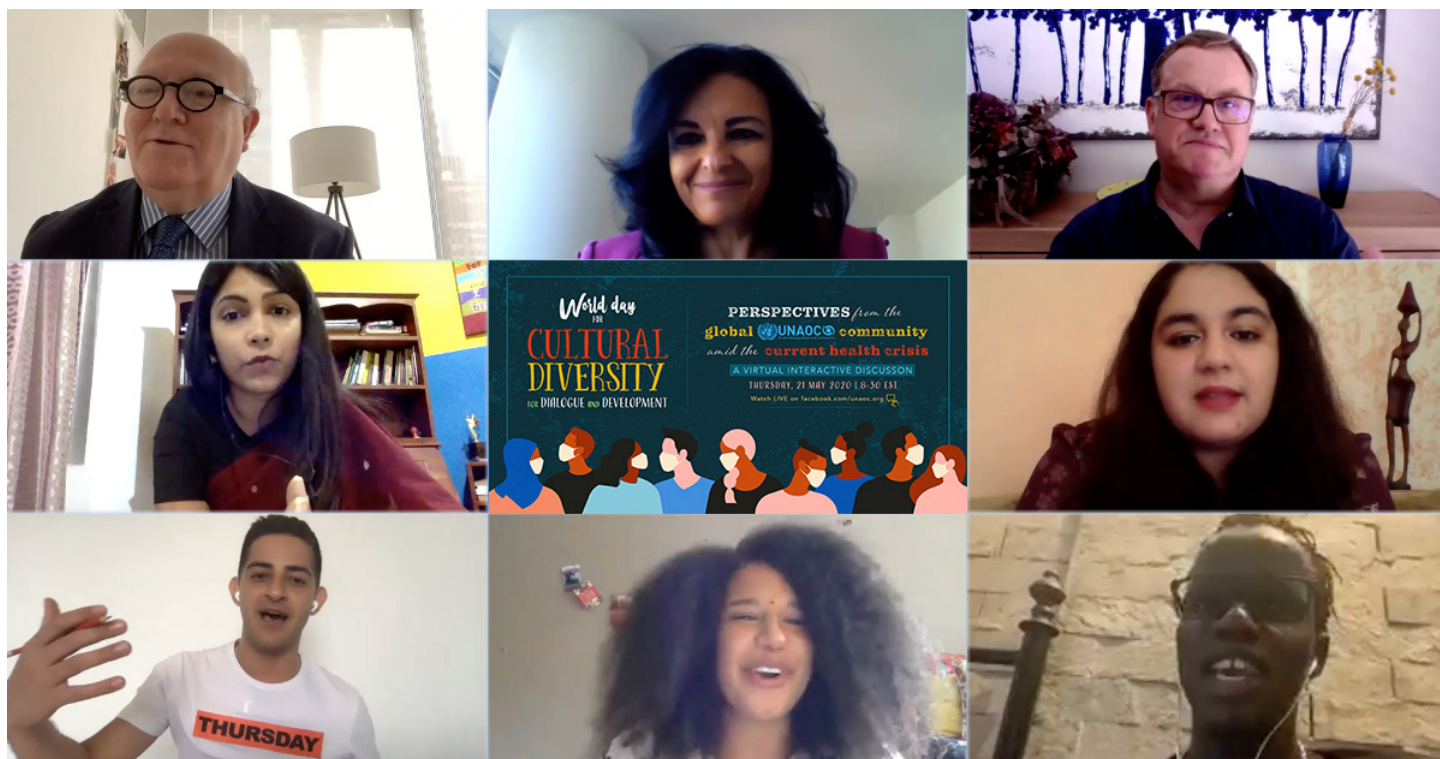
The event included a Youth Webinar entitled **“An Intergenerational Conversation: The Future They Want”**, which featured UNAOC programme alumni Ms. Sif Heide-Ottosen (2019 Fellow); Mr. Tomas Horvath (2017 Fellow); Ms. Ahlem Nasraoui (2017 Intercultural Innovation Award recipient); Ms. Magdalen Amony (2019 Intercultural Innovation Award recipient); Ms. Theresa Saade (2014 Intercultural Innovation Award recipient); Mr. Syed Ali Abbas (2017 Intercultural Innovation Award recipient); Ms. Louise Kanza (2017 winner of the PLURAL+ Youth Video Festival); Ms. Sivatharsini Raveendran (2019-2020 Youth Solidarity Fund recipient); Mr. Mohammed Ghanem

(Young Peacebuilder); Ms. Farah El Alami (Young Peacebuilder) and Ms. Afaf Lamkoutar (Young Peacebuilder).

The event also featured senior officials, including Mr. Vladimir Voronkov, Under-Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism; Ms. Diene Keita, Deputy Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA); Ms. Sima Sami Bahous, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Jordan to the UN; Ms. Corinne Momal-Vanian, Executive Director of the Kofi Annan Foundation; and Ms. Aya Chebbi, Africa Union Youth Envoy.

As part of this interactive, intergenerational discussion, the panel identified key challenges faced by young people amid the global pandemic and made recommendations on ways to strengthen their engagement and amplify their voices.

# UNAOC Alumni Gather Online to Celebrate World Day for Cultural Diversity



On 21 May, to celebrate the **World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development**, UNAOC invited programme partners and alumni working in the field of intercultural dialogue to participate in a virtual discussion.

Moderated by UNAOC Chef of Cabinet and Spokesperson Ms. Nihal Saad, the panel featured Ms. Afaf Lamkoutar (Morocco), Legal Representative of the Hijra Legal Clinic and UNAOC Young Peacebuilder; Ms. Yamini Ravindran (Sri Lanka), Director for Legal and Advocacy at the Alliance Development Trust, and recipient of the Intercultural Innovation Award of UNAOC and BMW Group; Ms. Nicole Banister,

Founder and Commissioner of My Basketball Team, and UNAOC Fellow; as well as Author and Reporter Mr. Chaker Khazaal. The event also featured representatives of the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) and Beach Soccer Worldwide.

Speakers shared experiences and lessons learned amid the pandemic, especially in the context of bridging the gap between various cultures. In his closing remarks, Mr. Moratinos stated, "Culture is the best antibody for mental health during the Covid-19 crisis."

## UNAOC Alumni Participate in Side Event on UNSC Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security

In April 2020, on the margins of the UN Security Council open debate on the implementation of **Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace and Security (YPS)**, UNAOC participated in a side event organized by the Permanent Missions of Jordan and the Dominican Republic to the United Nations and UNFPA/PBSO, entitled "Where are we now?". Ms. Farah El Alami, UNAOC Young Peacebuilder, and Mr. Syed Ali Abbas Zaidi, a recipient of UNAOC and BMW Group's Intercultural Innovation Award, participated in the interactive session. They shared their experiences advancing the YPS agenda and spoke about the impact of the global pandemic on their work.



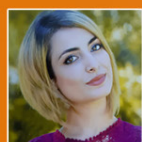
# Young Peacebuilders: *Humanity is One...and Young*



**Aram Ahmed**  
(Yemen)



**Mohammed Zaid**  
(Libya)



**Ranim Alhoushi**  
(Syrian Arab Republic)



**Ahmed Saad**  
(Egypt)



**Amal Ridene**  
(Tunisia)



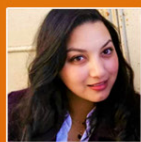
**Youssef Attia**  
(Egypt)



**Yasameen Qalolos**  
(Iraq)



**Irene Martín García**  
(Spain)



**Yara Ramadan**  
(State of Palestine)



**Osamah Alwash**  
(Iraq)



**Dayana Mansour**  
(Lebanon)



**Mohamed Chiker**  
(Morocco)



**Lamiaa Chnayti**  
(Morocco)



**Essaadia Zahir**  
(Morocco)



**Manal Makkieh**  
(State of Palestine)



**Patricia Tejada  
Fernández** (Spain)



**Rayan Hanna**  
(Lebanon)



**Abdelwahab Ait  
Tayeb** (Algeria)



**Sarra Messaoudi**  
(Tunisia)



**Bushra Dumour**  
(Jordan)

“

*“I believe the power of the Young Peacebuilders programme comes from connecting and empowering active youth across different regions where they collaborate, learn from and inspire others to continue their work.”*

**Ms. Shaimaa Soliman, Egypt**



Today's global challenges are more complex than ever before. The world is witnessing an increasing wave of racism, xenophobia, and stigma, sowing the seeds of hatred and division at a time when the world needs to be united against the unprecedented health challenges of Covid-19. Despite all efforts, hate-mongers continue to drive a wedge between different ethnic groups, religions, and civilizations, which can lead to extreme violence.

UNAOC aims to strengthen a culture of peace in which diversity is viewed as enriching rather than polarizing and in which people of different identities can identify as **“One Humanity”**. In this light, **Global Citizenship Education** provides the skills and values needed to cooperate in resolving the interconnected challenges of the 21st century. Guided by the principle that youth are key agents for preventing

conflict and achieving peace, UNAOC develops educational programmes for young civil society leaders to acquire intercultural competencies and build critical thinking skills to help foster cross-cultural dialogue and overcome stereotypes and intolerance.

On 15 January 2020, UNAOC launched the fourth edition of its **Young Peacebuilders programme**, focusing on the Middle East and North Africa, with the support of **AEXCID (Agencia Extremeña de Cooperación Internacional para el Desarrollo)**. After a competitive selection process, UNAOC selected 20 young women and men between 18 and 25 years old from Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Spain, the State of Palestine, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, and Yemen.

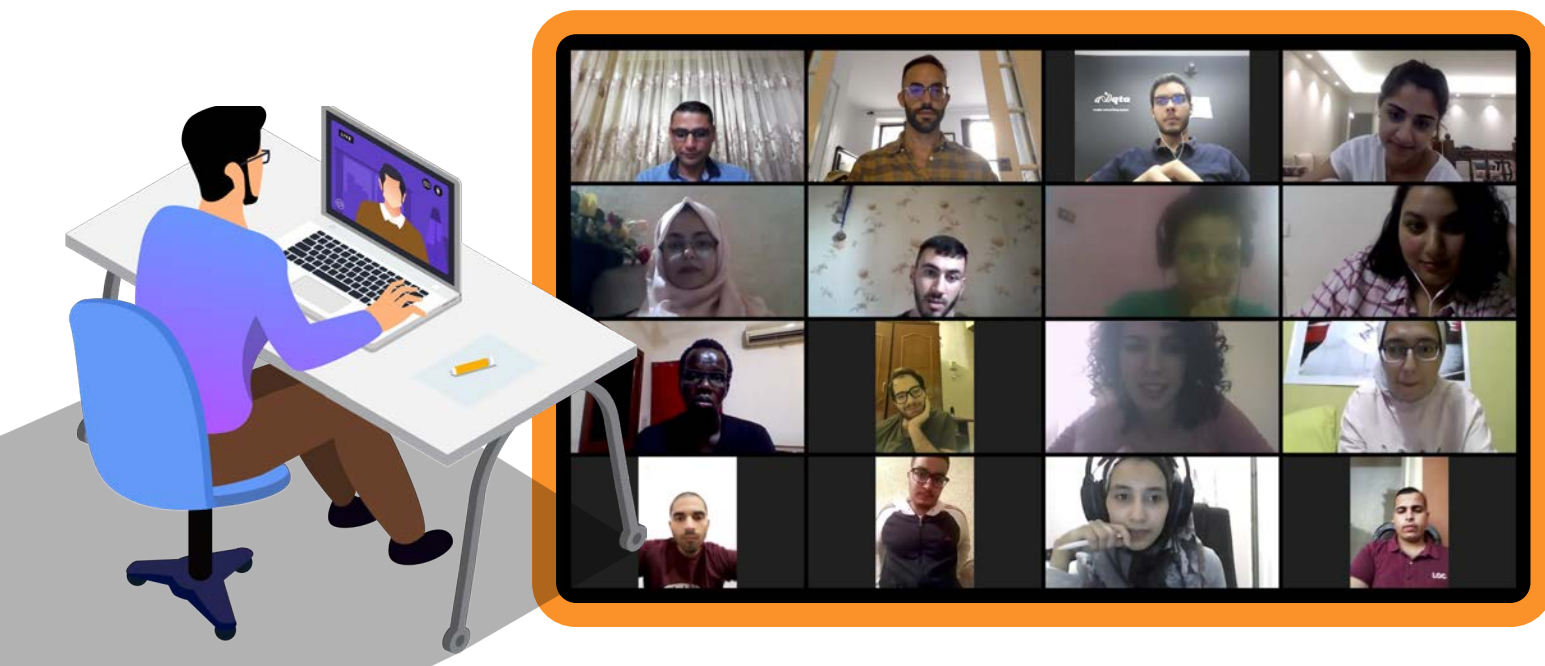


The Young Peacebuilders programme consists of four phases that facilitate a progressive and experience-based learning process for participants: a series of online preparatory modules (phase 1), a face-to-face workshop (phase 2), the implementation of a peace initiative (phase 3), and a final symposium (phase 4), during which Young Peacebuilders present their work to relevant stakeholders.

The skills and tools that the young civil society leaders acquire with the Young Peacebuilders programme assist them and their organizations in implementing more successful projects while raising awareness among decision-makers on the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding and policy-making processes, in line with UN Security Council

Resolutions 2250, 2419 and 2535 on YPS, and the UN Secretary-General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism.

In March 2020, Covid-19 struck us all. After finishing the first online stage of the project, UNAOC decided to replace the in-person workshop with a series of online workshops named "Covid's Sunnyside", showcasing the resiliency of young people in bringing sustainable peace. Starting in the summer of 2020, participants interacted with one another through webinars on emotional and critical thinking skills, conflict resolution, the dynamics of intercultural and interfaith dialogue, theatre of the oppressed as a tool for conflict transformation, peaceful revolution, and meaningful youth engagement.



“

*“I strongly believe that the effectiveness of YPB lies in its ability to combine the inculcation of rigorous theoretical knowledge of issues facing humanity (within and beyond the MENA region), and pertinently, the cultivation of practical skills and tools to design and implement projects and initiatives to turn this deep understanding into concrete, context-specific solutions.”*

**Mr. Kuany Kuany, South Sudan**

“



*“The programme empowers young people to be a walk-the-talk peace tool and encourages them to inspire others.”*

**Ms. Radwa ElSekhily, Egypt**

Participants are currently using the acquired knowledge and skills to implement their peace initiatives to build bridges of understanding between cultures and religions

Meanwhile, the participants of the third edition of Young Peacebuilders, also taking place in the MENA region, finished the implementation of their projects (phase 3) during the first half of 2020. Targeting youth, including migrants, marginalized young people and youth vulnerable to radicalization, they organized workshops, debates, and campaigns. Innovative solutions helped strengthen competencies on PVE, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, gender equality, and combatting online hate speech. Through a series of capacity-building workshops, participants provided other young leaders with public-speaking skills and knowledge on entrepreneurship and ways to access decision-making processes in peacebuilding.

Participants in the third edition will present their projects by producing a video that will showcase the power of youth in peacebuilding, drawing attention to their work in the field. This will serve as an advocacy tool and will be disseminated on several

platforms, including social and traditional media, reaching strategic actors such as UN agencies, civil society, academia, media, and the private sector. Moreover, a virtual symposium (phase 4) will take place to bring them together to present the results of their local initiatives and discuss their role in promoting peace. Many participants found this project to be an exceptional experience, as stated by Aziz Hannachi from Tunisia:

“It was a life-changing opportunity that allowed me to meet amazing people, leaders, and influencers in the MENA region and to make lasting friendships. I also got to know and learn many things that I didn’t know existed, and gain and advance many skills that are necessary to face the challenges of today. Now I believe in myself, and I am sure that I will do great things for my community thanks to this programme that opened my eyes to many things, and I believe I will shine bright and implement an impactful project,” said Aziz.

Finally, in 2021, after four successful editions of its Young Peacebuilders programme, UNAOC plans to develop a training guide for peace educators in English, Spanish, and Arabic.

“

*“This programme gives participants sufficient space to learn and practice skills through practical application that affects society.”*

**Mr. Main Alshamayleh, Jordan**







# Preventing Violent Extremism through Education

South Asia is one of the most ethnically and religiously diverse region in the world. In recent times, it has seen a worrying rise in religious and ethnic intolerance, with young people being “pushed or pulled” to the frontlines of violent extremism as victims, perpetrators, or beneficiaries. However, regional and international efforts to prevent violent extremism and build sustainable peace cannot bear results until and unless young people are considered essential agents.

In this light, UNAOC partnered with **UNESCO’s Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP)** to train and empower South-Asian youth leaders with the skills and tools to create and implement community-wide

PVE-E (prevention of violent extremism through education) activities, mobilize their respective communities, and consequently, lead to pro-social behavior change and gear their communities towards sustainable peace. This joint initiative, called “**#YouthWagingPeace - The Whole of Community Approach to PVE**”, is the second phase of #YouthWagingPeace and involves taking the 2017 UNESCO MGIEP “Youth-Led Guide on Prevention of Violent Extremism Through Education” to the grassroots level.

Within the framework of this project, UNESCO MGIEP, UNAOC, and the Sri Lanka National Commission for UNESCO selected 35 youth leaders between 21 and 35 years old from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India,



Myanmar, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka and invited them to participate in a workshop in Colombo, Sri Lanka, on 10-16 February to improve their social, emotional, and critical-thinking skills, media and information literacy and hands-on project management. Prior to the face-to-face workshop, participants were invited to an online engagement phase to map drivers and efforts to prevent violent extremism in their communities, regions, and countries.

Workshop participants are currently implementing activities to build bridges of peace and prevent violent extremism in their communities with mentorship support from UNESCO MGIEP and UNAOC. Through this youth-led bottom-up and hands-on approach, it is expected that UNESCO MGIEP and UNAOC will reach and empower at least 1,000 stakeholders in six countries.

Such is the case of Ms. Anam Gill and Mr. Sehaj Shani, who between April and May brought together young leaders from South Asia, international

authors, musicians, and policy experts for the **#PeaceKarna Cross Border Sessions**, which involved a series of virtual dialogues on peace in the unprecedented times of Covid-19. The initiative allowed participants to share and engage on ways to make the world a better place. It spanned a period of two weeks and eight sessions on ways to cultivate regional peace from the ground up.

**“Faith in the Commonwealth: PVE through GCED, Religious Literacy and Interfaith Dialogue”** was also one of the initiatives under the leadership of Mr. Tushar Kanti Baidya. It gathered more than 200 local youth from across Bangladesh for a virtual training that explored and enriched their knowledge and understanding of global citizenship education, hate speech, identity and its role in community formation, media and information literacy, and ways of identifying disinformation, women’s role in peacebuilding processes, and community mapping skills to engage in community actions.



*#YouthWagingPeace participants Mr. Sehaj Shani (left) and Ms. Anam Gill (right) implemented a series of virtual dialogues on peace in the unprecedented times of Covid-19 called “#PeaceKarna Cross Border Sessions”, bringing together young leaders from South Asia, international authors, musicians, and policy experts.*



*#YouthWagingPeace participant Mr. Tushar Kanti Baidya gathered more than 200 local young people from across Bangladesh for a virtual training entitled “Faith in the Commonwealth: PVE through GCED, Religious Literacy and Interfaith Dialogue”*

Mr. Parwiz Mosamim, who participated along with other Afghan activists in the implementation of the **#WhereIsMyName campaign**, is yet another successful case. This initiative exposed the reality of Afghan women who are publicly identified by their male relatives’ names and thus deprived of their own identities. As a result of their collective effort, the Government of Afghanistan announced in September that Afghan citizens would have their mothers’ names printed on their national identification cards along with their fathers’. This victory caught the attention of international media.

Another key output of the programme will be the publication of a youth-led report on the State of PVE in South-Asia, aiming to be published in 2022. It will include actionable recommendations on ways to influence policy and practices on PVE in the region.

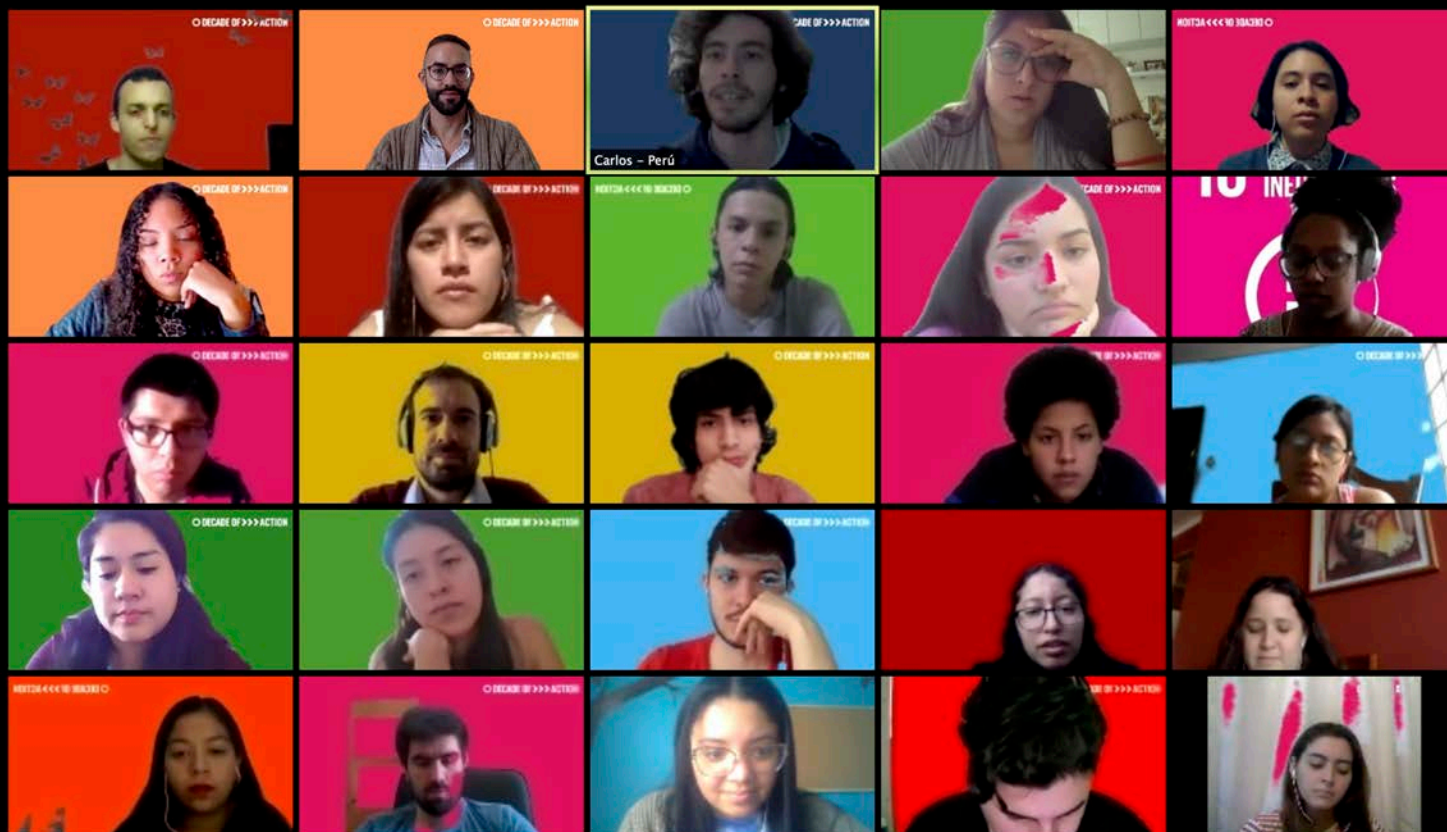
After successfully implementing their initiatives, participants will come together for a second workshop to review and synthesize best practices from the community engagement phase and receive additional training on scaling up and fundraising.

*#YouthWagingPeace participant Mr. Parwiz Mosamim took part in the implementation of the **#WhereIsMyName campaign**, along with other Afghan activists. This initiative exposed the reality of Afghan women who are publicly identified by their male relatives’ names and thus deprived of their own identities.*





# YOUNG PEACEBUILDERS



## Youth Leadership and Action for a Better World

Between 24 October and 15 November 2020, Mr. Mohamed Ghanem, a participant in the 3rd edition of UNAOC's Young Peacebuilders programme, successfully coordinated the virtual edition of the Young Leaders Conference Peru organized by MCW Global in collaboration with the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru.

This initiative provided young people from Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, French Guiana, Guyana, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, Uruguay, and Venezuela, with an introduction to leadership, capacity building and networking.

UNAOC was invited to take part in the conference, and with the collaboration of Ms. Rosario Díaz Garavito, organized the webinar **"Youth Leadership and Action for a Better World"** on 31 October 2020. This provided the participants with advocacy tools and ways to engage with the United Nations.

The Young Leaders Conference is a comprehensive programme that supports young people looking to tackle local community issues with special attention to gender equality and mental health. It was followed by up to three months of virtual mentorship, during which the participants received support as they worked on their respective projects.



# Youth Bridging Differences through Sport



*“Sport is love, and we can promote this message through encouraging inclusivity in all our programmes.”*

**Mr. Kato S. Abdu, UNAOC Youth Solidarity Fund Recipient**

UN General Assembly Resolutions A/RES/70/1 and A/73/24, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and Security Council Resolution 2419 (2018) on Youth, Peace and Security all recognize the growing contribution of sport to the realization of development and peace through its promotion of tolerance and respect and its valuable contributions to the empowerment of women and young people. They remind us that sport has the power to change perceptions and behaviors, break down racial and political barriers, and defuse conflict. Although sport alone cannot end or solve conflict, it represents a flexible and cost-effective medium for prevention by developing intercultural and interreligious understanding.

With its motto, **“Many Cultures, One Humanity”**, UNAOC has developed partnerships and created initiatives that use sport as a tool to foster social inclusion, cohesion, and diversity. In June 2020, **Fundación Atlético de Madrid, La Liga, and the Global Association of Sports Federations (GAISF)** joined

UNAOC’s **#OneHumanity Campaign** to enforce the notion of sports as an instrument for social inclusion and bringing people together from diverse cultures, religions, and ethnicities and forming a mosaic that enriches humanity. Find out more on <https://onehumanity.sport/>.



*International athletes of Fundación Atlético de Madrid join UNAOC’s #OneHumanity campaign*

*“It’s not just about ticking boxes. We need to develop tangible storytelling methods on sport and PVE and the role of youth within.”*

**Nevena Vukasinovic, UNAOC Fellow**

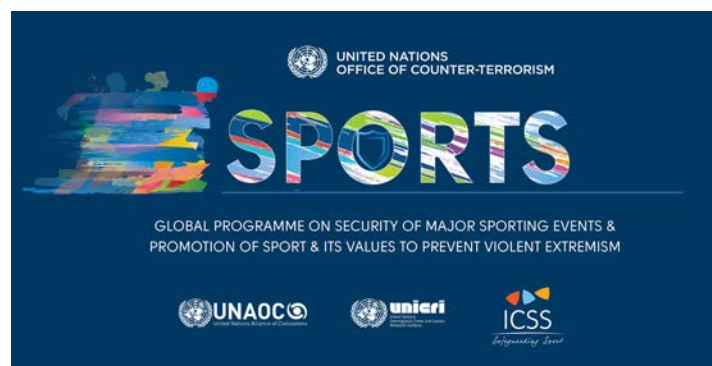


In February 2020, the UN Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) launched the **“Global Programme on Security of Major Sporting Events, and Promotion of Sport and its Values as a Tool to Prevent Violent Extremism”** in partnership with UNAOC, UNICRI, and the International Centre for Sport Security (ICSS). The programme aims to promote the development and adoption of advanced policies and practices to enhance the security of major sporting events while promoting sport and its values as a tool to prevent violent extremism. The programme is taking place over 36 months, and UNAOC is responsible for ensuring that the project’s outcome is relevant to youth.

The current youth generation is the largest in history, and the global agenda has increasingly focused on young people as key actors in powerful social movements. Their diversity and ability to mobilize their peers have greatly contributed to addressing the triggers of violent extremism, among other challenges related to global and local instability.

Several elements of the Global Programme, such as the Global Awareness Campaign to Say No to Terrorism, a Policy Guide on Sport and PVE, a Training Handbook, and an App for sports events organizers to prevent violent extremism, will be designed in collaboration with young people as key stakeholders.

UNAOC collected the first impressions of young people during the **Global Programme’s Virtual High-Level Meeting** (18 September 2020) and the first **International Expert Group Meeting** (21-23 September 2020) on Sport for Preventing and Countering Violent Extremism Conducive to Terrorism. Within the framework of the expert meeting, UNAOC moderated a session on **“Youth Engagement in sport and P/CVE programmes”**. This panel included youth from different regions and backgrounds, including three UNAOC alumni: UNAOC Fellow Ms. Nicole Banister, Global Partnerships Coordinator of Grassroots Soccer; Youth Solidarity Fund recipient Mr. Kato S. Abdu, Executive Director at Integrated Community Development Initiative; and UNAOC Fellow Ms. Nevena Vukasinovic, European Sports Policy and Strategic



Partnerships Adviser. Panelists agreed that the full potential of youth and sport can only be achieved if the diversities in the two are acknowledged; and that the inclusion of youth in vital processes of change enables the use of sport values as a tool to prevent violent extremism.

In 2021 and 2022, within the context of the Global Programme and in collaboration with its partners, UNAOC will organize various youth fora to consult with and collect young leaders’ inputs. The first one took place online on 20-21 January 2021, engaging 40 young civil society leaders between 15 and 29 years old from across the globe. During these sessions, a connection will be created between the youth and decision-makers, both within and beyond the programme, by creating a safe space for youth to dialogue with Member States on ways to improve youth’s integration in decision-making processes. Member States will be represented at the youth consultation by their National Focal Points (NFP) on Sports Values for the Prevention of Violent Extremism, a network established by the Global Programme. They were also introduced to the youth perspective of the project at the first NFP meeting, which took place on 10 December 2020.

Finally, successful and innovative practices on sport and PVE from youth-led organizations will be collected, promoted, and supported through the compendium of best practices and the grant mechanism for civil society organizations, the latter launched by partner UNICRI in November 2020 with a particular focus on youth-led organizations.





## Media and Information Literacy reinforced amid Covid-19

The rising discrimination and xenophobia amid Covid-19 are key drivers of radicalization and violent extremism. The increase in stigma, hate speech, and hate crimes targets individuals and groups wrongfully vilified and perceived to be associated with the spread of the virus across the globe. Allowing it to tear apart the fabric of our societies is perhaps one of the most severe upheavals that the current health crisis has inflicted upon our world. More than ever, it is imperative to stand up against all forms of discrimination that are an affront to universal human values and rights.

Within this framework, the UNESCO-UNAOC UNITWIN Cooperation Programme on Media and Information Literacy and Intercultural Dialogue (MILID University Network) published a response to the Covid-19 health crisis in May 2020. With UNAOC and UNESCO's support, the MILID University Network shared its experience in research and dialogue to unite people under the cause of discerning factual information from destructive discourses to promote human solidarity, cultural diversity, and the fight against racism through MIL.

The prevalence and persistence of online content inciting hate, polarization, and discrimination require the investment of resources in MIL education as it helps individuals develop critical-thinking skills to resist propaganda and provide online content that serves as a socially-inclusive tool to balance the proliferation of divisive and polarizing messages. UNAOC's founding document, the High-Level Group Report (2006), recognizes "media literacy as a bulwark against radicalization through the media." Separating fact from opinion, evaluating text and image for bias, and constructing and deconstructing content based on

principles of logic are critical skills of the 21st century.

In 2020, UNAOC continued its initiatives to enhance the MIL competencies of young people, grassroots organizations, and the broader audience to foster mutual respect, understanding, and improve relationships between peoples of different cultures and religions. The Young Peacebuilders programme and #YouthWagingPeace are peace education programmes with a curriculum that provides knowledge, skills, and concrete tools on MIL to civil society leaders who use this within the framework of their grassroots peacebuilding activities, including capacity building of youth and training of (informal, non-formal and formal) educators. The UNAOC-UNESCO MIL Clearinghouse is a multi-language, open, and collaborative Internet platform for outreach. It facilitates access to resources and information (articles, organizations, and events) relevant to Media Literacy, Media Education Policy, and Youth Media.

UNAOC has also been working on helping the younger generation acquire skills to create counternarratives against hate and intolerance and innovative techniques to develop compelling content that promotes positive values, debunks certain myths, and responds to misrepresentations of facts.

The global pandemic has triggered an unprecedented health, humanitarian, and development crisis, demanding an unprecedented global coordination response. MIL and its core competencies are more relevant than ever to tackle the devastating consequences of Covid-19 and build a more peaceful, tolerant, and inclusive world.



# Stand up #forSafeWorship

[www.forSafeWorship.org](http://www.forSafeWorship.org)



## Global Communications Campaign #forSafeWorship

As part of the High-Level Meeting of the Group of Friends of UNAOC in September 2020, Mr. Moratinos launched a global call to action #forSafeWorship to safeguard religious sites and worshipers worldwide. This new UNAOC communications campaign is meant to engage the global youth and faith communities in taking concrete actions to contribute to implementing the UN Plan of Action to Safeguard Religious Sites, developed by UNAOC and launched by the UN Secretary-General in September 2019.

The call to action #forSafeWorship celebrates the universality of religious sites as symbols of our shared humanity, history, and traditions. UNAOC created a brand-new website with various resources to foster respect and understanding, including videos and toolkits on ways to contribute to and advocate for the safeguard of religious sites worldwide. People around the world are invited to participate actively in the campaign by submitting multimedia stories about their personal connections to religious sites.

To date, UNAOC has received and featured multimedia stories from young people in Afghanistan, Bahrain, Brazil, Canada, Egypt, France, India, Indonesia, Iraq, Nepal, Portugal, Spain, the United Kingdom, the United States, and more! In addition, the campaign has already reached 315,000 people on social media.

For more information about the global call to action #forSafeWorship, visit [forsafeworship.org](http://forsafeworship.org), and follow the account @forSafeWorship and the hashtag #forSafeWorship on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.





# Amid Covid-19, the Fellowship Programme Goes Online



## Fellowship 2020 Cohort



In the face of the global Covid-19 pandemic, the **Fellowship programme** of UNAOC, an initiative made possible by the generous support of the **Government of Germany**, adapted to a new reality and introduced an innovative online fellowship format. Through virtual meetings with various stakeholders and online capacity-building activities, 19 fellows from Europe and North America (EUNA), the Middle East, and North Africa (MENA) had the unique opportunity to discuss issues related to intercultural and interfaith dialogue as well as media and peacebuilding.

### Online modules and engagement activities

During a two-week introductory phase, EUNA and MENA Fellows participated in three online modules focused on this year's topic, **"Building Peace in the Age of New Media"**. Developed by UNAOC and ex-

pert trainers, each curriculum focused on interreligious and intercultural dialogue, media, and peacebuilding. The modules introduced Fellows to global trends, key concepts, and good practices in different contexts across the EUNA and MENA regions.

### Virtual Exposure

Following the introduction phase, UNAOC Fellows engaged in online discussions with various actors representing governments and official institutions, faith communities, media, and civil society. Given the new format, UNAOC Fellows were able to travel virtually to a new country each day, allowing them to visit twelve countries in total, twice as much as the usual format of the programme. During this ten-day phase, EUNA Fellows met stakeholders from Egypt, Lebanon, Morocco, Qatar, Tunisia, and the United Arab Emirates. They notably had conversa-

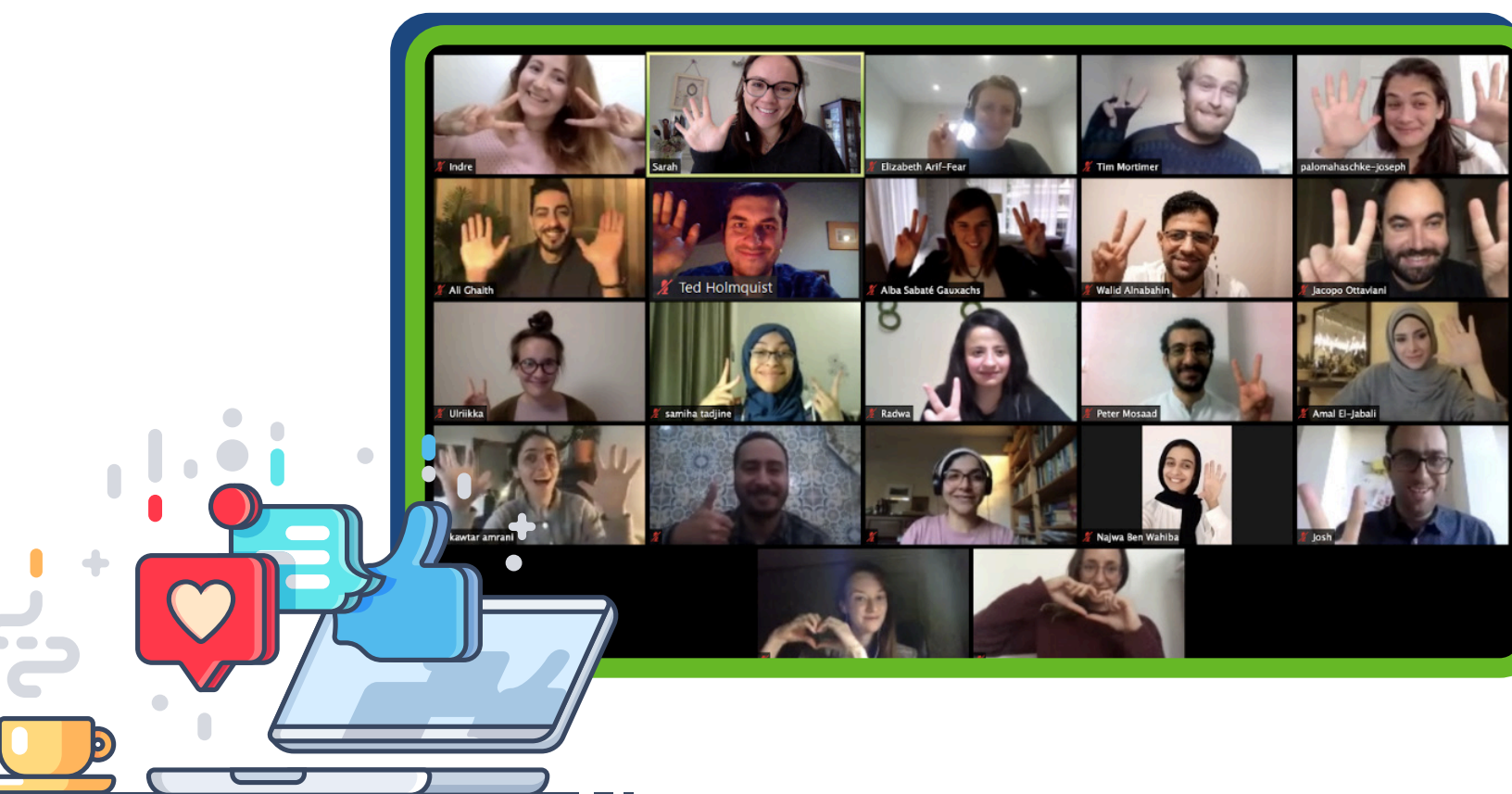
tions with the Al-Azhar Observatory about religion and ways to combat extremism, and the Moroccan organization Mimouna to learn about their efforts to preserve Jewish heritage in the Kingdom. In addition, the staff of the Lebanese civil society organization Arcenciel presented their efforts to support the most impacted communities after the explosion in Beirut, Lebanon, and the staff of the Qatari foundation Education Above All talked about their work with vulnerable communities across the world. The Fellows also engaged in interesting discussions about media in the MENA region with representatives of Al Jazeera in Qatar and Twitter in the United Arab Emirates.

Simultaneously, MENA Fellows had online meetings with stakeholders from Austria, Canada, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States. During the meeting with the Global Center for Pluralism in Canada, they discussed issues such as the role of social media in pluralism and education programming with refugees, while a roundtable with the KACIID Dialogue Center and religious representatives in Austria focused on the importance of interfaith dialogue in peacebuilding. Representatives of the Federal Foreign Office of Germany also participated in the programme and addressed the issue of

disinformation amid Covid-19, and representatives of the Spanish Ministry of Foreign Affairs spoke about the role of Western influence in the MENA region. In addition, representatives of Twitter in the US talked about their work on freedom of speech and hate speech prevention. In between the meetings with stakeholders from the EUNA and MENA regions, Fellows had regular debrief sessions.

## New Efforts to Strengthen Capacity Building

After the virtual exposure phase, the UNAOC dedicated four days of the Fellowship programme to online capacity-building activities. Fellows participated in two webinars in collaboration with the KACIID Dialogue Center and eight workshops focusing on interreligious and intercultural dialogue and peacebuilding in the age of new media. UNAOC Fellows developed projects focused on issues discussed during the programme, including religion, hate speech, stereotypes in the media, and peacebuilding. Throughout the reflection and concluding sessions, UNAOC Fellows expressed their excitement to work with other young leaders from across the world and participating in modules, webinars, and workshop sessions together.





# Building peace in the age of new media



The **2020 UNAOC Fellows** worked together to produce exciting media projects related to new media, intercultural and interreligious dialogue, and peacebuilding. They worked on collective outputs both within their cohorts and with Fellows from the other group. All projects are building on good practices and lessons learned during the Fellowship Programme. Their media projects include the following:

## MENA Fellows

MENA Fellows worked on a project that seeks to address the concept of peace and its meaning in different contexts. The project encourages a deeper understanding of peace by inviting people worldwide to contribute short video messages on their understanding of peace in their country.

A second group of MENA Fellows focused on the line between freedom of expression and hate speech and how individuals from different backgrounds perceive it. By showcasing different perspectives, the project hopes to highlight both the variety of opinions that exist around this issue, and emphasize common values shared by all, regardless of their backgrounds.

## EUNA Fellows

EUNA Fellows worked on a project to reshape the narratives about marginalized communities. The project stems from the assumption that a more human and inclusive approach to storytelling can boost the empathy of the public towards marginalized communities, and therefore help defuse hate speech.

A second project seeks to explore inclusivity in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. Through a series of podcasts featuring expert opinions about facilitating inclusivity in dialogue, the project seeks to create a platform on which diverse voices can be heard.

## Cross-cohort Projects

In addition to the media projects – and for the first time in the history of the Fellowship programme – UNAOC Fellows also collaborated across cohorts.

One of the projects looks at the power of hashtags in amplifying people's voices on social media platforms. Fellows are working on a series of articles to compare the regional impact of global and local hashtags in their home countries. This project seeks to raise awareness about how hashtags can have a different impact across the world and how to better leverage hashtags to promote peace.

A second project seeks to address and dispel global stereotypes about feminism. Through a series of short videos and images, the project invites participants to share perspectives on challenges and successes in advancing women's rights in the EUNA and MENA regions. The project aims to break down cultural stereotypes about women and feminism and invite the audience to see women's rights as a global issue.

# UNAOC Fellowship Alumni Event: “Building peace and fostering social cohesion in the age of new media”



In December 2020, UNAOC and the **Permanent Mission of Germany to the UN** organized the annual alumni event of the **UNAOC Fellowship programme**, which took place online. Building on the theme of the **2020 Fellowship**, which focused on media, inter-religious dialogue and peacebuilding, the event took place under the banner of **“Building Peace and Fostering Social Cohesion in the Age of New Media”**.

Mr. Moratinos facilitated an interactive discussion with twenty UNAOC Fellowship Alumni from the EUNA and MENA regions, highlighting that despite the challenging circumstances faced this year, “we need to maintain a spirit of creating a better world”.

The theme of the event coincided with the recently-

adopted UN General Assembly Resolution on the Promotion of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace, which is at the core of the work of UNAOC.

Through five panel discussions, UNAOC alumni and the High Representative for UNAOC discussed underlying issues, such as exploring the definition of peace, fighting misinformation through media literacy, promoting inclusive intercultural and interreligious dialogue, drawing a line between hate speech and freedom of speech, and engaging in all-of-society partnerships to promote peace and foster social cohesion.

UNAOC Fellows shared their experiences and good



practices on ways to harness the power of new media and information technology to support the global community and international organizations in their work towards building sustainable peace and fostering social cohesion.

H.E. Mr. Günter Sautter, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN, participated in the Alumni Event and shared reflections on the long-standing cooperation between the Federal Republic of Germany and UNAOC, and the ten years of the UNAOC Fellowship, calling the programme “a great initiative and a highly valued project.”

The virtual event included a networking lounge for participants and an exhibition hall showcasing various projects and campaigns of UNAOC and some of the media projects produced by the 2020 UNAOC Fellows.



“

*“The UNAOC Fellowship is a great initiative. This is a highly valued project.”*

**H.E. Mr. Günter Sautter, Ambassador and Deputy Permanent Representative of the Federal Republic of Germany to the UN**

## Joint UNAOC-KAICIID Small Grant Programme

*Enhancing the role of interreligious dialogue and cooperation in responding to Covid-19 and promoting public health in the Central African Republic*



To respond to the current global crisis and support religious and community leaders in their actions and engagement to counter the spread of Covid-19 and its negative impact on the well-being of societies, communities, and individuals, UNAOC and the KAICIID Dialogue Centre called on organizations in the Central African Republic to present their projects for an opportunity to receive quick-impact funding aiming to support local organizations through interreligious dialogue and intercommunal cooperation.

Among the Grant recipients is the Central African Observatory for Elections and Democracy (OCED), an organization working on citizen awareness, civic and electoral education, and electoral observation. OCED also works to promote and protect human rights, including the right to health. OCED has conducted numerous awareness campaigns, including on the prevention of the Covid-19 pandemic. As part of the programme, OCED's project will focus on increasing awareness among women and youth on preventing the Covid-19 pandemic in churches, mosques, and schools.

The Small Grant Programme is part of UNAOC's commitment to mitigate identity-based conflicts in the context of heightened tensions fueled by the Covid-19 pandemic.

# News Generation Against Hate: Empowering Local Youth to Create Alternative Narratives and Champion Diversity in the Media

UNAOC is committed to engaging with local actors such as municipalities, which are often in the frontlines in addressing challenges linked to intercultural and interreligious tensions that may erupt within diverse communities. UNAOC's project with the **municipality of La Courneuve (Paris area, France)** aims to empower younger generations to combat fake news, hate speech, and stereotypes through the promotion of multiculturalism and interreligious understanding in the media.

The **French city of La Courneuve** is a multicultural city where 80 percent of the population is of foreign descent and about a third of the population is under 25 years old. It is a melting pot where youth with cultural and religious backgrounds from Europe, the MENA region, sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia and Asia, live together and interact every day.

In this light, Mr. Moratinos, and the Mayor of La Courneuve, Mr. Gilles Poux, signed a Memorandum of Understanding to implement their joint project. In early March 2020, UNAOC, in partnership with the



Mayor of Los Angeles, Mr. Eric Garcetti, hosted the first L.A. Dialogue on Creating Cities of Belonging. The event aimed to foster reciprocal knowledge, understanding, and exchange. The unique dialogue structure connected local and global actors, civil society, and municipal leaders such as a delegation from La Courneuve.



The project includes workshops and capacity-building activities for young people in La Courneuve to help them deconstruct stereotypes affecting their communities. Participants aged 15 to 25 years old will be selected from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds. As part of the programme, they will engage with local and national actors committed to dialogue and multiculturalism, produce podcasts, write news stories, and create videos that cover issues related to multiculturalism and interreligious understanding.





## Celebrating the 5th Anniversary of **UNSC Resolution 2250**

9 December 2020 marked the 5th anniversary of the unanimously adopted **UN Security Council Resolution 2250**, a turning point for the **Youth, Peace and Security (YPS) agenda**, which recognizes the invaluable impact and contribution of young people in the security sector. Resolution 2250 represents a shift in views and understanding of young people's role in the peacebuilding process. It transformed the way the global community thinks about, interacts, and partners with young people on peace and security matters.

UNAOC recognizes youth as autonomous actors, partners and agents of social change. Young people are an integral part of UNAOC's efforts to promote peaceful and inclusive societies, at the policy level as much as in its programmes. Below is one of many examples of how UNAOC supports young people in their efforts to promote dialogue between diverse cultural and religious groups.

### Nurturing for Peace

Despite many challenges in 2020, the Youth Solidarity Fund (YSF) continued to support the grant recipients of the 8th edition launched in 2019. The Uganda Muslim Youth Development Forum (UMYDF), a youth-led organization founded by

two survivors of the 2010 Al-Shabaab attack in Kampala, Uganda, is one of the grant recipients who demonstrated resilience and dedication to their project implementation. With the support of YSF, UMYDF embarked on a journey to address divisive religious narratives that often push young people towards violent extremism and undermine interfaith relations and peaceful coexistence. As a result, two interfaith peace gardens were built in the Bugiri and Mayunge districts in Eastern Uganda. To engage more young people in interfaith dialogue and fostering social cohesion among different religions, UMDYF organized peace leadership camps and a gardening fellowship with participants representing seven religions. Unfortunately, the pandemic made it impossible for the camp and fellowship to happen in person. Thanks to UMDYF's resourcefulness, 50 young people enjoyed an interactive virtual fellowship. Plans were also made to switch to a hybrid format, allowing youth to work with professional gardeners on building the peace gardens.

The project was well received by stakeholders. *"This is an opportunity for us as persons of different faiths to come together and focus on the values that cut across in our religions as we promote peace and justice,"* said one religious leader in the district.



*“Many cultures. One humanity.”*

*UNAOC aims to improve understanding and cooperation among nations and peoples across cultures and to reduce polarization at local and global levels. It helps develop more inclusive societies, in which diversity is experienced as an asset.*

**United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC)**

**730 Third Avenue, 20th Floor, New York, New York 10017**

**☎ Phone: +1-929-274-6217**

**📠 Fax: +1-929-274-6233**

**✉ Email: [contactaoc@unops.org](mailto:contactaoc@unops.org)**

**🌐 [www.unaoc.org](http://www.unaoc.org)**

**🐦 [twitter.com/UNAOC](https://twitter.com/UNAOC)**

**f [facebook.com/unaoc.org](https://facebook.com/unaoc.org)**

**📷 [instagram.com/unaoc](https://instagram.com/unaoc)**