
Annual Report 2025

During the reporting period, the IFGK had twelve active staff members: Dr Martin Arnold, Christian Büttner, Anne Dietrich, Reinhard Eismann, Prof. Dr Albert Fuchs, Kevin Kaisig, Dr Barbara Müller, Julia Nennstiel, Dr Achim Schmitz, Dr Christine Schweitzer, Dr Dalilah Shemia-Goeke and Ulrich Wohland.

Activities of IFGK staff members

Dr Martin Arnold: At the IFGK, he is primarily involved in the projects *gewaltfreieaktion.de* (as editor), *Bibliografie* (as initiator and supervisor) and *Gütekraft* (currently on social media); see 'Projects' below.

Advancing Social Defence (SV) as part of the 'Defence Without Weapons' (WoW) campaign remains his top priority. He is involved in the WoW steering group and several working groups, as well as in the Essen model region (formerly: regional group). The meeting with the Mayor of Essen led to a meeting with the Deputy Mayor for Justice, Security and Public Order. He also pledged his support for raising awareness of SV, which is becoming increasingly concrete following four meetings with him – for example, through forum theatre workshops in Essen's schools. A public information evening was held in collaboration with the *IG BAU trade union*. Following a productive discussion with the executive committee of the *Essen Alliance for Open-Mindedness*, the plenary session is also set to learn about SV. Two civil courage training sessions proved enriching for us and others.

In 2025, Martin gave talks on SV in Krefeld, Iserlohn (Report: <https://gewaltfreieaktion.de/koennen-wir-wehrhaft-ohne-waffen-sein/>), Hilden, Dinslaken and at the '*Solidarische Kirche im Rheinland*' working group; he addressed the topic of SV during a church service in E-Kupferdreh and helped in the run-up to the establishment of the WoW regional groups in the Lower Rhine and Cologne-Bonn. September 2025 marked the 100th anniversary of the liberation celebrations following the Ruhr Uprising. To mark the occasion, the KräftigeGüteStiftung organised the 'Day of the Power of Goodness', for which Martin produced a leaflet

"Effective Action in the Ruhr Struggle 1923–1925" (<https://gewaltfreieaktion.de/vom-ruhrkampf-lernen-demokratie-verteidigen-durch-guetekraeftiges-handeln/>) states: Following "passive resistance", skilful diplomacy turned the Ruhr Struggle into a non-violent victory against the military. The WoW Initiative Group met in Essen, and a 'Political Salon' on the Ruhr Struggle and the SV today rounded off the weekend (<https://gewaltfreieaktion.de/das-machte-mut-politischer-salon-ueber-ruhrkampf-vor-100-jahren-und-soziale-verteidigung-heute/>).

In February 2025, Martin's article '*Social Defence Under Fire. Serious Questions and Answers*', pp. 41–43, appeared in the proceedings of the online conference 'Civilian-Based Defence Put to the Test. Current Issues and Practical Challenges', held on 6 and 7 September 2024, BSV-HUD 87.

He also contributed the article on pp. 20–22 to *Wissenschaft&Frieden Dossier 101*, 'Building Social Defence': '*Defence-Capable Without Weapons – Essen Regional Group. From its Founding to Collaboration with the City of Essen*'.

He remains active in refugee support work, the Essen citizens' initiative 'Mobilität~Werk~Stadt', the local peace group at the Forum Billebrinkhöhe, the 'Rethinking Security' initiative, the 'Discovery of the Ark' community (founded by Lanza del Vasto), as well as on the board of the Kraft der Gewaltfreiheit Foundation and on the advisory board of KräftigeGüteStiftung.de, which campaigns for greater kindness and non-violence in the fields of policing, the criminal justice system, domestic policy and diplomacy.

Christian Büttner oversaw the relaunch of the IFGK website and is currently responsible for its maintenance. He reads the IFGK's publications and provides feedback on them.

In 2025, **Anne Dietrich** continued to work in Bujumbura, Burundi, as a peace expert for the Regional Programme for Burundi, Eastern Congo and Rwanda run by the Civil Peace Service of the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ). She carried out training on non-violent conflict resolution and conflict-sensitive programming with local GIZ partner organisations and other implementing organisations of the Civil Peace Service (EIRENE, Agiamondo) and their partners, as well as other local organisations. In doing so, she worked primarily with the approaches of Non-Violent Communication and the Alternatives to Violence Programme. She took part in IFGK activities online. She will retire in January 2026 and will become more actively involved in the IFGK, albeit largely online from her new home in Kenya.

In 2025, **Reinhard Eismann** took part in the online meetings of 'Demonstrating and what next?' on a continuous basis, with the exception of two occasions.

As a member of the Board of Trustees of the *Kraft der Gewaltfreiheit Foundation*, he provided detailed comments and individual opinions on seven funding applications submitted during the reporting period.

As a member of the steering group for the 'Wehrhaft ohne Waffen' campaign, he took part in the group's two meetings in March (an online meeting) and September (an in-person meeting in Essen), as well as an online meeting of the 'AG Aktion' in April.

In October 2025, Reinhard Eismann took part in the BSV expert discussion 'Arguments against militarisation' in Heidelberg.

Kevin Kaisig is an editor at gewaltfreieaktion.de (see Projects below). During the reporting year, Kevin Kaisig was working on his PhD and conducting research into civilian peace armies in the context of the non-violent transformation of land conflicts. His research focuses on relevant experiences in the Global South, particularly in India and Colombia. In Munich, he is involved with the peace and human rights organisation Peace Brigades International (PBI) and presents the 'Eine-Welt-Report' on Radio Lora. The interview programme features representatives from organised civil society and social movements, as well as activists.

In 2025, **Dr Barbara Müller** was involved in promoting her new book *'Militant Democracy. Military Occupation and Non-violent Liberation of the Ruhr Region 1923–1925'*, which was published in February. In addition, she gave a talk at the IFGK's study day in March on the topic: 'Advancing Social Defence: Old and New Threats'. Later in the year, she began work on a book project on social defence together with Christine Schweitzer.

Furthermore, as managing director, she acts as the point of contact and is responsible for finances and matters relating to the association's legal status; she is also currently involved in recruiting young talent and providing research consultancy.

Julia Nennstiel is writing a PhD thesis in Aarhus on the topic of social defence and, during the reporting year, also completed a working paper on 'Interacting with Security Forces'.

Dr Achim Schmitz taught various German language courses in Krefeld. He continued to run his seminars at Fliehdner University of Applied Sciences in Düsseldorf-Kaiserswerth (sociology, communication and teamwork).

Furthermore, social defence and support for conscientious objectors and deserters during wartime remain the focal points of his peace policy – through a speech at the Easter March in Krefeld and through information events. He also resumed providing advice to conscientious objectors in light of the changed political situation.

Within the Fellowship of Reconciliation, he remained active on the Peace Education Commission.

Dr Christine Schweitzer: Until February 2025, Christine served as managing director of the Bund für Soziale Verteidigung (BSV). From 1 March, she will continue to work as an editorial assistant and editor for the magazine *'Friedensforum'* (www.friedenskooperative.de) as a member of staff at the IFGK (now on a mini-job contract). As part of the project she initiated with Julia Nennstiel in 2022, a working paper on the topic of unarmed civil defence and social

Verteidigung, which was published in February 2025 in English (AP 29) and German (AP 30).

On behalf of Irene Publishing, she proofread and corrected an English translation of Barbara Müller's book on the Ruhr struggle. Due to the translator's illness, the work has not yet been completed.

Since April, she has been working on a book project on social defence. The first part deals with social defence in the context of international conflicts.

Further publications:

(2025) 'The Priority and Potential of Civilian Conflict Management in Times of "War Readiness"'.
In: Schell, Maximilian; Reiner Anselm and Friederike Kippner (eds.) (2025): *Just Peace Put to the Test. A Reader on Contemporary Explorations in Protestant Peace Ethics*. Leipzig:

Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, pp. 235–246

(2025) 'Social Defence', In: Stiftung die schwelle (eds.): *Perspectives on Peace in Times of War*, Bremen: Donat Verlag, pp. 40–51

(2025), 'Without weapons, but not defenceless? Creating security without violence', in:
Wintersteiner, Werner (ed.) (2025): *'Greater security without weapons'.* *On the relevance of Hans Thirring's peace plan*, Vienna: Promedia, pp. 181–196

Events:

Lecture on civil conflict management from a pacifist perspective for a conference on pacifism organised by Friedrich Schiller University Jena and the Episcopal Academy of the Diocese of Aachen, 4 June 2025

In a podcast from the 'Tee und Taktik' series, she spoke with Julia Kramer about social defence.

Simulation exercise on social defence in Nettetal, at the invitation of a local group, 1–2 November 2025. Online lecture on the topic of 'Total Defence' for 'Wehrhaft ohne Waffen' and IFGK on 15 December 2025.

For an initiative launched by a former Nonviolent Peaceforce staff member, she edited an exploratory report for a UCP project. The project began work in the spring under the name 'UCP in Palestine'.

In addition, at the start of the year she edited – on behalf of the BSV – a proceedings volume for the international online conference on social defence (Civilian-Based Defence Put to the Test. Current Issues and Practical Challenges, HuD No. 87, <https://soziale-verteidigung.de/produkt/civilian-based-defence-put-to-the-test-conference-documentation/>) and developed an online course on the interrelationship between climate, the environment and conflict (<https://share-peace.soziale-verteidigung.de/neuer-kurs-klima-umwelt-und-konflikt/>).

During the reporting period, Christine attended two meetings of the 'Wehrhaft ohne' initiative group. She took part in the 'Waffen' events (15–16 March and 20–21 September) and in several meetings of the 'AG Aktion' group, as well as in the BSV's discussion group 'Demonstrating – and then what?'.

At the IFGK, she is responsible for managing members and prospective members.

Dr Dalilah Shemia-Goeke has been co-managing director of the Federation for Social Defence since 2025; she hosts the podcast 'Tee und Taktik' on the research and practice of non-violent resistance, completed her PhD under Brian Martin on the application of strategic non-violence concepts to curb the power of transnational corporations, and worked as a peace specialist at Pro Peace in Jerusalem, where she collaborated with non-violent movements.

2025. *People Power Strategies to Curtail Corporate Power: Serving the Public Good* (Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature: London/Cham).

Ulrich Wohland works at the Workshop for Non-Violent Action in Heidelberg and is very active in educational work.

Study days and general meeting

Spring

Saturday, 22 March 2025 in Cologne at the Friedensbildungswerk, with the option to participate online:

Lea Bonasera: 'Nonviolent resistance failure: why climate campaigns struggle to win (and what we can learn from this)'

Dr Christine Schweitzer: "Unarmed Civilian Protection" (civilian peacekeeping) as a field of activity within social defence

Dr Barbara Müller: Advancing social defence. From past to present threats

Kevin Kaisig: Methodological issues in research on non-violence

Autumn

Saturday, 15 November 2025, online:

Eliane Gerber, Non-violence in the media

Ulrich Wohland, From Democracy to Fascism?

Dr Christine Schweitzer, Can social defence deter or prevent an external adversary from launching an attack?

A general meeting of IFGK staff took place on the day before each of the study days.

Memberships

UCP/A Community of Practice (CoP)

In 2024, the IFGK became a member of a newly established international network of organisations working in the field of unarmed civil defence: [or: concerned with ...].

<https://www.ucpacommunityofpractice.org/> Christine Schweitzer follows the network's work and attends its meetings.

War Resisters' International

From 26 November to 29 November 2025, the WIR Council meeting and a conference took place in Barcelona. Christine was unable to attend due to illness and only joined the Council meeting itself online.

On 10 December, the annual general meeting of the WRI Friends' Association took place online. The IFGK is represented at the WRI by Christine Schweitzer. She is also chair of the Friends' Association.

Civil Conflict Management Platform

We did not undertake any activities in this area in 2025.

New Publications

AP 29, Unarmed Civilian Protection. Lessons for Planning for Social Defence, by Christine Schweitzer, February 2025, <https://www.ifgk.de/ap-30-unarmed-civilian-protection/>),

AP 30, Unarmed Civil Defence. Suggestions for Planning Social Defence, by Christine Schweitzer, February 2025, <https://www.ifgk.de/ap-30-unbewaffneter-ziviler-schutz/>,

AP 31, Interacting with Security Forces. Challenges and Opportunities for Avoiding Violent Repression in Social Defence, by Julia Nennstiel, August 2025, <https://www.ifgk.de/ap-31-interacting-with-security-forces/>

Projects

'Rethinking Social Defence'

The project 'Rethinking Social Defence: New Findings and Unresolved Questions from International Research on Civil Resistance over the Last Thirty Years' by Julia Nennstiel and Christine Schweitzer was not completed as planned due to excessive workload. However, three working papers emerged from the project, which were published in 2025.

Podcast: Tea and Tactics

The 'Tee & Taktik' podcast focuses on the latest research and practical experiences relating to civil resistance. The podcast is hosted by Dr Dalilah Shemia-Goeke and Lea Bonasera.

Strategic protest is effective and absolutely essential in this day and age. Lea and Dalilah demonstrate this in their discussions on the research and practice of civil resistance. Dalilah holds a PhD in resistance studies. Lea also conducts research on the subject; she is an author, co-founder of Letzte Generation, and is now setting up the new resistance project 'Guter Grund'. Together, in what is now the third series, they share academic insights and practical experiences on the last Thursday of every month, dispel many misconceptions surrounding the topic, and aim to inspire courage.

You can view previous episodes here: <https://www.podcast.de/podcast/3510507/tee-taktik>

Upcoming episodes include: on the role of refusal by security forces (including the KDV); on the role of women in non-violent movements; on the successes and lessons of the peace movement; on Arne Semsrott's new book *Gegenmacht*; on how we can move from the defensive back to the offensive; and many more

non-violent action

'Gewaltfreie Aktion' is an online news and opinion portal that reports on and comments on social movements and non-violent actions.

Inspired by the US news portal 'Waging Nonviolence' – People Powered News & Analysis', which has been in existence since 2009, and following in the tradition of the German-language journal 'gewaltfreie aktion – Vierteljahreshefte für Frieden und Gerechtigkeit' (1969–2010), the site focuses on nonviolent campaigns or activities aimed at addressing social injustices, constructive conflict resolution, nonviolent social change and politics, as well as nonviolence in general.

The activities of the numerous civil society initiatives and social movements in many countries are brought to the attention of the wider public. Particular attention is paid to movements and individuals who work non-violently towards constructive solutions to conflicts, for example in the areas of the environment, climate, diversity, justice and peace.

The aim is to give their voices a wider audience.

The editorial team consists of Stephan Brües, Kevin Kaisig and Martin Arnold.

Click here for the online magazine: <https://gewaltfreieaktion.de/>

Bibliography on Non-violent Action

The bibliography of German-language literature on non-violent action, social defence and civil disobedience, compiled by Reiner Steinweg, was imported into Zotero by Kevin Kaisig during the reporting year. It is due to be updated in 2026 – to date, it covers German-language literature up to 2011. It can be viewed here:

https://www.zotero.org/groups/6007232/bibliografie_gewaltfreiheit/library