

# More about International Peace Teams....

## MPT International Peace Teams FAQs

### 1. Where do MPT Peace Teams Work?

MPT has been training and deploying Peace Teams domestically and internationally since 1993. Historically, MPT has deployed Peace Teams to Bosnia, Panama, Iraq, Canada, the US/Mexico Border, Chiapas and Juarez, Mexico, Haiti, and El Salvador. Closer to home, we have deployed teams during controversial events like GLBT Pride Parades, at protests during the 2008 & 2016 Republican National Conventions, during riots following sporting events, and on reservations at the invitation of First Nations peoples in North America. Peace teams have been present at hate group rallies to deter inter-group violence.

### 2. What do teams DO? How does MPT's work differ from humanitarian or “conflict resolution” work?

MPT Teams act to reduce and prevent violence in war or conflict zones, where they are invited by one or more party to a conflict. Teams practice a specific type of conflict intervention work that MPT refers to a “Third Party Conflict Intervention” or TPNI, although there are many names for this type of action. TPNI actions include: protective accompaniment, human rights monitoring/reporting, offering a peaceful presence/modeling peaceful behavior and reaction, and interpositioning (putting our bodies between conflicting parties).

Unlike conflict resolution/transformation, mediation or dialogue work, our Teams do not seek to mediate or resolve the underlying conflict directly, or to broker 'peace talks' - although we may act to support one or all of these actions. Instead, our Teams are focused on the front-line work of reducing violence and the threat of violence, in order to create some safer space for everyone involved. By creating this space it allows the parties themselves to determine the means and the terms of transforming/resolving the conflict. There is often a role for other conflict resolution and dialog organizations to work in concert with MPT.

MPT is not a humanitarian or charity organization; in general, we do not deliver aid or funds to the areas where we work. There are many organizations that organize relief and aid efforts or raise funds to donate directly to those in need, and many can do this much better than MPT. Some organizations send delegations which are meant to represent that organization in other roles, for example, in negotiations, or as an observer for the organization. We believe our strengths and talents lie elsewhere, and that there is a real and demonstrated need for our unique contribution.

## What will we do in Palestine and where will we be?

The team will make decisions about where to go and what to do collectively based on circumstances on the ground. In past years, some teams moved around quite a bit; others were more or less stationary. The last team worked in the north around Nablus, Tukarim, Howarra, in the south in Hebron and, east in the Jordan River valley in Tubas. Each area is under constricting occupation pressure, it just takes a different forms in different areas.

What the team does will vary depending on the situation on the ground, but some examples are:

- During olive harvest settlers often attack olive pickers so we offer protective accompaniment. Actually, we usually pick too, the sooner we get out of the field the safer it is.
- Accompany elementary children to school for protection.
- Record number of students allowed through a check point and when the check point is closed so the UN can tell if students are being denied access to school.
- Observe and report irregular roadblocks (flying checkpoints) recording where they are, how long they block the road, and watch for violations of human rights laws.
- Witness human rights violations, opening and closing times at Agricultural gates.
- Observe the closing of communities. And find ways into the closed communities to report on what is happening.
- Report on home demolitions, they are hard to actually observe, but visiting the family before and after offering support and recording details.
- Witness and report of demolition of green houses and olive trees.
- A University was regularly being attacked by the occupying Army and by observing and reporting over a month we played a role in stopping this outrage.
- At the weekly clashes between occupying army and local residents it is important to witness for human rights violations, it is also part of learning what the occupation is doing to people's lives.
- Reporting on additional houses and land becoming too dangerous to live in from one year to the next.
- Offer protective accompaniment to families when soldiers have occupied part of their house.



### 3. What is MPT's International Team Training Process? What if I live far away from your home office in Michigan?

Our intensive training process is rigorous, but it is designed to be completed by busy people with full time jobs and/or other commitments. The 2-3 month International Team Training process can be completed in large part from anywhere.

A 5 daylong International Team Training Retreat in Michigan, specific to your team & deployment site, is required. Additionally, our 8-hour Basic Nonviolence Skills Training is required before beginning the intensive International Teams

Training retreat. Team members who live outside the geographic area sometimes arrive early so they may complete this 8-hour training prior to the International Team Training. Additionally, MPT travels all over North America to offer nonviolence trainings; if there is a group of at least 12-25 people in your area interested in taking our training please contact us.

We do not require that potential team members participate in Domestic Teams, but it is a valuable opportunity to learn by being part of a team.

## 4. What are the Qualifications to Apply for a Team?

We look for applicants with the following traits, in no particular order:



- A commitment to nonviolence
- Willingness and ability to work in a team
- Willingness to practice consensus decision making
- Willingness to commit to the intensive training process
- Willingness to engage in self-reflection
- Willingness to 'do the work' of teams, including not only TPNI in the field, but:
  - report writing
  - record keeping
  - living in community
  - team building
  - self-care and reflection, centering, spiritual practice (whatever that means to you)

- Willingness to fundraise
- Multi-cultural awareness
- Able to take responsibility for getting what you need to feel prepared.
- Commit to team debrief & evaluation in the field with team and with MPT,
- Commit to debrief with MPT about team experience upon returning to US.
- Commit to debrief with a professional in war zone psychology upon return to US.
- Readiness to do awareness & outreach work, sharing your team experiences, MPT's story and the stories of those we meet on teams.

## 5. Where do teams live in the field?

Where your team lives will depend on the conflict zone where you chose to deploy. Accommodations are by no means luxurious, but teams generally have running water and electricity, phones (and cellular phones), beds or mats to sleep on, a working kitchen and a western-style bathroom with shower and toilet at home.

Sometimes teams are called to spend the night (or several nights) away because they travel to a remote area, or in the course of protective accompaniment, etc. In that event, teams most often stay

with local families, and team members need to be prepared to sleep on the ground in a sleeping bag or similar situation.

## 6. What is Team life like?

Team members live and work as a team, and make decisions by consensus. Team money is drawn from a common pot for all expenses including food, housing, and transportation in country; the team will set a budget and determine reasonable expenses together. Team members are expected to equitably share the work of the team, from administrative and record-keeping, to direct action, to writing reports and posting them on our blog/website. As part of security no team member will ever be alone during the entire deployment.

Between TPNI work, report writing, and living as a team, your team experience can be very intense with little 'down time.' However, daily team meetings and centering/reflection time are built in to the team process in order for teams to plan appropriate activities. If you are in the field long enough, your team will plan appropriate days or hours "off."

Team members, on returning, tell us that going on an MPT Peace Team is an amazing, life-changing, eye-opening experience. They often tell us they form very close bonds with teammates and would trust (and have trusted) their team members with their life. That being said, many team members find that a significant aspect of their nonviolence work on a peace team is learning to live in community with their team. Team members may have very different personalities, expectations, living styles, requirements for cleaning/cooking/eating/sleep, etc. In the stress of living in a war or conflict zone, these routine "roommate" problems can be exacerbated. MPT encourages and assists team members in exploring these issues before deployment with their team, building good communication skills, and to learning techniques for solving interpersonal conflict on a team.

## 7. What does it cost to go on a team?

Teams are expected to fund raise to cover the cost of their team training, deployment, and airfare. An unusual part of MPT's teams is that fundraising and expenditures are a collective process; everyone helps raise the funds for the whole team, often individual team members raise different amounts but expenditures are still a collective process. This is part of the teamwork and in the spirit of nonviolence. It also acknowledges that difference resources are available in different communities. For the January 2018 team to Palestine the estimated cost per person is \$3,800 for 4 weeks or \$4,600 for 6 weeks. With effective Team fund raising, it is possible to go on a team with no "out of pocket" cost to you. Team members have fund raised through letter-writing, events, Crowdfunding (e.g., GoFundMe), presentations (ask for an MPT speaker to talk to your event), and more. Fund raising is an important component of outreach and education about where you are going in your community, and it is also important to team building. Some team members also chose to contribute from their own funds, and this is fine.

## 8. How are donations for Team costs handled?

All donations to fund your Team deployment should be made directly to Meta Peace Team: We establish an "account" for each team, and will track any funds that come in earmarked with your name or designated for your team, and then give you regular reports on your team's fund-raising progress.

MPT is a nonprofit 501(c)(3) and donations made directly to MPT are tax deductible. When your team deploys, the appropriate amount will be issued by check from the Team Fund, and monies shared among the team members prior to travel.

## 9. What about Safety on a Team? Can MPT Ensure I'll be safe?

***MPT cannot guarantee the safety of anyone volunteering for a Peace Team.***

Any venture in a conflict/war or occupation zone comes with inherent risks, and MPT cannot guarantee the safety of anyone volunteering with us (nor frankly, can any other organization operating in such theaters). The type of conflict intervention work peace teams do necessitates contact with potentially dangerous situations. It is up to each individual to weigh the risks associated with peace team work, and to choose whether to assume those risks and also to manage them with their team while in the field.

That being said, MPT considers Team safety to be paramount, and to such we devote extensive training/preparation time, as well as staff and volunteer time to supporting teams in this regard.

## 10. What is MPT's history with regard to safety?

Meta Peace Team (formerly *Michigan Peace Team*) has been training and deploying Peace Teams to do conflict intervention and nonviolence work in conflict/war zones since 1993. In that time, we are happy to report that none of our 160+ international peace team members have suffered life-threatening injury or death. However, international volunteers in war zones can and are seriously injured or killed, and there have been deaths of international volunteers with other organizations in the West Bank/Israel Palestine (including Gaza).

In the case of accidental injuries (sprains, digestive ailments, once a broken bone from a slip and fall, etc.) in Palestine, for example, medical care has been readily available and more than sufficient through Palestinian clinics, hospitals, and paramedic services. There are also large hospitals fairly equivalent to United States standards in Israel if specialty care were required.

## 11. How do MPT Teams Manage Risk?

MPT has found that risk is best managed in six ways, which all of our team members are trained in and espouse:

1. **Awareness of the potential situations and underlying issues** one may come into contact within the field so that team members may effectively manage risk. This includes:

- intensive pre-deployment training with MPT over several months, including team building and nonviolence skills training.
- reading and self-study regarding the conflict zone and history
- opportunities to participate in Domestic Peace Teams in the United States prior to deployment overseas.
- additional in-country training and situation briefing with our sister peace organizations.

Additionally, teams always include at least one veteran peace team member (the “Anchor”), who is familiar with the situation on the ground and with nonviolent conflict intervention work and MPT's values. Of course, each team member needs to take personal responsibility in each of these areas. Each day, Peace Team members discuss potential activities as a team, including possible dangers, and chose by consensus only those activities which are acceptable. Rarely, unexpected and/or emergency situations do arise, yet we train team members to check in with one another before acting, to stick to the guidelines outlined here, and to avoid or remove themselves from situations if necessary.

## 2. Awareness of situations as they unfold.

3. **Acting as a team:** Peace Teams are usually 4-8 people, and no one is to ever act alone in the field. Furthering the team dynamic, before each "activity" or event, and on a daily basis, the team discusses personal roles and boundaries or concerns for the activity, and important points for safety. Decisions are made by consensus to draw on the wisdom of all members. For example, the team might decide, “while attending this nonviolent demonstration, we will stand toward the back to minimize risk and increase our ability to exit. We will have affinity buddies and always maintain eye-contact distance and awareness of our buddies. Also, two team members will stand several feet behind to monitor the 'big picture' and take photographs." To be a team the team needs to act based on the most "risk adverse" member. For example, if any one team member wishes to leave, we will all leave as a team.

4. **Staunch adherence to nonviolence and conflict de-escalation techniques.** We believe that our best safety measure is de-escalation of a potentially dangerous situation (for both team members and for the local populations). We must remember that the local population, the oppressed population, will have to live with any response to what we do. This work follows the teachings of Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr., and has been practiced with great success for many years by international organizations in addition to MPT, including Peace Brigades International, Nonviolent Peaceforce, and Christian Peacemaker Teams.

5. **Strong relationships and connections** in the communities where we work, as well as alliances with local nonviolence leadership and groups is key to MPT's work in the field. We follow local leadership when it comes to safety, security, and strategy and often look to them for advice on these matters.

6. **Support from staff and volunteers** here at home is also critical to our program. There is an experienced, trained cadre of staff and volunteers here at MPT which is dedicated to supporting our teams in the field with advice, counseling, assistance, a listening ear, and more. Also, all returning team members debrief with MPT's psychological professional trained in supporting those involved in work in conflict/war zones.

## 12. What MPT Teams DO NOT DO:

- Engage in violence, seek to provoke violence, or respond with violence
- Donate money to individuals or organizations
- Deliver humanitarian aid (under usual circumstances)
- Give out money or valuable gifts while on a team
- Act singly or without their team members

## 13. MPT Teams DO:

- Maintain a commitment to their team, and consensus-based process
- Remain staunchly nonviolent while on a team
- Maintain a commitment to the mission and values of MPT, and TPNI work
- Do the necessary research/study, record keeping, reporting/awareness and follow-up work to support and maximize their team experience
- Raise funds as a team and individually for the cost of their deployment
- Remain aware of individual power and privilege

We hope this information is helpful. Please do not hesitate to [contact us](#) directly for more information, additional resources, or clarification.