

Since it has declared itself a Comunidad de Paz, San Jose has seen the death of 35 members – 33 executed by paramilitaries and 2 executed by FARC guerrillas. Nonetheless, the community is determined to continue with its policies of nonviolent resistance as the only way forward for them. In March of 1998, 240 persons initiated the first return to the hamlet of La Union. The ultimate objective of the Peace Community is for all the members to be able to return to the hamlets from which they were displaced.

Zones of Peace organized from outside a community can also contribute to a peace process.² For example, UNICEF's humanitarian cease-fires for the immunization of children established children as a zone of peace. Under James Grant's leadership, negotiations with the government and the guerrillas in El Salvador permitted repeated three-day cease-fires during which international teams carried out primary health care and immunization of children in war zones. These cease-fires laid the groundwork for later peace negotiations in El Salvador.

Another community that received a Fifty Communities award was the Tibetan community at Dharamsala, India. Over 80,000 Tibetans led by their religious and temporal leader the Dalai Lama have fled the Chinese occupation of their country and established a refugee community at Dharamsala. Facing the destruction of their culture and religion – of the country's 6,259 monasteries, nunneries and temples, all but eight have been destroyed – they had a duty which far transcended the need merely to keep body and soul together: to nurture a whole civilization in exile. A democratic administration in exile was set up at Dharamsala to manage the affairs of the Tibetan refugees. With the assistance of the government of India, Tibetan schools were established to impart modern secular education to the Tibetan children while also emphasizing the learning of Tibetan language and literature, history, culture, religion, arts and crafts. Today there are 85 Tibetan schools throughout India, Nepal and Bhutan with a total student population of 27,585. About 70 percent of children attend school. Nearly 200 monasteries and nunneries have been established to revive religious education and traditions. In short, the Tibetans have kept alive in India what was almost totally destroyed or Sinocised inside Tibet. Credit for the success of the Tibetan community at Dharamsala and elsewhere undoubtedly goes to his Holiness the Dalai Lama who received the 1989 Nobel Peace Prize. The dedication to peace and to creating concerned human beings is what guides all the activities of the Tibetan community in exile – its education, health care, economic and environmental initiatives, its performing arts and literature, its scientific studies of the mind and spirit. The unique combination of pragmatism has been called a “culture of the heart”.

Another example of a community that refused to fight is the Kosevo Hospital in Sarajevo. In 1995, as part of the UN Fiftieth Anniversary celebrations, Friends of the UN recognized the hospital as one of fifty outstanding communities in the world.⁴ Two doctors came to New York to receive the award just after NATO strikes began forcing the Serbs to withdraw. Before the war, Sarajevo was a very cosmopolitan city with a thoroughly mixed population of ethnic and religious groups. People had intermarried for years. When the war began, media incited hatred between groups, but the people of Sarajevo held to their pluralism and refused to turn against one another.