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EDUCATING COMMUNITIES ABOUT HOW TO BE POLICED IN A DEMOCRACY

INPROL Consolidated Response (08-005)

With contributions from Major Moayyad Abzakh, David Bayley, Robert Bereiter, Art Crosby, Elizabeth Kunce-Wagner, Otwin Marenin, John Nikita, Gordon Peake



Prepared by J. O'Neil G. Pouliot

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Submitted by: [Robert Bereiter](#), Training Coordinator, Police Education Development Unit, Law Enforcement Department to the OSCE.

Drafted by: [J. O'Neil G. Pouliot](#), INPROL Police Commanders Forum Facilitator and former Chief Superintendent in the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

With contributions from:

1. Major [Moayyad Abzakh](#), Training Department, Public Security Directorate, Amman, Jordan.
2. [David Bayley](#), Dean and Professor of the School of Criminal Justice, State University of New York.
3. [Art Crosby](#), Chief Superintendent, Commanding Officer of the RCMP (retired)
4. [Elizabeth Kunce-Wagner](#), Humanitarian Analyst, Center for Excellence in Disaster Management, Tripler AMC, HI
5. [Otwin Marenin](#), Professor of Criminal Justice, Washington State University
6. [John Nikita](#), former Senior Police Advisor to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), and a retired senior Canadian police officer.
7. [Gordon Peake](#), Senior Policy Adviser, Australian Federal Police, Timor-Leste

The full text of the responses provided by these INPROL members can be found at <http://www.inprol.org/node/2534>. INPROL invites further comment by members.

Note: All opinions stated in this consolidated response have been made in a personal capacity and do not necessarily reflect the views of particular organizations. INPROL does not explicitly advocate policies.



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EDUCATING COMMUNITIES ABOUT HOW TO BE POLICED IN A DEMOCRACY

Background:

The police face major problems building legitimacy in countries emerging from conflict where a uniformed officer is often a cause for fear rather than a source of protection and comfort. Typically, politically motivated crimes are never investigated by the police. Strategies to reform the police must be supported and sustained by community support and assistance, beginning with education about the values and processes involved in democratic policing.

Query:

What effective methods are in place for educating the civilian community on "How to be policed in a democracy"? How do you transition from a police force oriented toward the use of "force" to one that is focused on "public service"? How does the community hold the police accountable and make them responsible for upholding democratic principles, the rule of law, and human rights.

Response Summary:

To educate communities in "How to be policed in a democracy," in countries emerging from conflict, the philosophy and strategies that have been used for democratic and community based policing are relevant. Community policing seeks to inculcate the following democratic policing principles into standard practice:

- Maintain a degree of social order that makes a peaceful democratic society possible (i.e. mediating in the day-to-day disputes that result from inter-personal and inter-group conflicts).
- Safeguard the individual right to life, personal security and enjoyment of property.
- Ensure law is enforced within the bounds of justice, through equality, fairness, impartiality and the exercise of discretion.
- Respond to and assist those in need or those who cannot care for themselves. This principle recognizes the humanitarian and social side of the police function and responsibility to the community.
- Create and maintain a relationship with the public that builds respect for and participation in the law. This principle acknowledges that citizen involvement is the most important means of dealing with crime and social disorder as part of their responsibility as citizens of the community.
- Prevent crime and control conduct that is threatening to persons or property, thereby promoting a feeling of security within the community. This recognizes that security and safety are created by police presence and actions.
- Support the criminal justice system in such a manner as to command the respect of and support from the public. This is accomplished through monitoring the activities of the police and encouraging fair and equal treatment of the public.

Community policing requires all citizens of the community, the police, social services, and NGOs to work together to identify the root causes of crime, disorder and threats to public safety and develop solutions in a collaborative manner. Effectiveness rests on two core elements:

- Changing the role of the police, including demilitarization, if necessary, and placing primacy on community service as opposed to partisan support for political authorities.
- Establishing a supportive relationship between the police and the public.

1. Changing the role of police to place primacy on community service

Educating the public about how to be policed in a democracy will not succeed on its own. Police behavior will need to begin to conform to principles of democratic policing, which may require a fundamental transformation. Before seeking to implement an education program about policing in a democracy, international police advisors and monitors should assess the following:

- What is the current nature of relations between the police and the communities that have been engaged in the internal conflict? Have the police been politicized and used as an instrument of violent repression by the state against one of the parties to the conflict? Is this inter-group schism reflected within the rank and file of the new police force? How do the police respond to calls for service by members of the groups formerly involved in the conflict? What are the police doing to promote cultural sensitivity and inter-group cooperation?
- Have the police been suborned by criminal networks with linkages to ruling political elites, creating an illicit power structure antithetical to democratic policing and the rule of law?
- Is there a civil society to work with? Which individuals, organizations and groups have a stake in building trust and educating the community about a democratic role for the police? Do any of these actors have the ability to support police accountability?
- What are the current accountability structures for police misconduct? Do they function? Are they well known, transparent, and trusted by the public?
- What is the present attitude within the police force toward democratic and community policing? What are the current practices, if any, that are utilized to build trust between the police and the community?

In the aftermath of conflict, the result of this assessment is liable to reveal that the existing police force operates in a political context that is hostile to democratic policing, either because the police have been militarized, politicized or criminalized, perhaps all three. Civil society is apt to be weak or non-existent and incapable of serving as a check on the abuse of state power. These are not propitious circumstances for police reform, but international police advisors and mentors will have a mandate to undertake to change this. The mandate should allow international police to play a leading or at least a supporting role in demilitarizing, depoliticizing and/or decriminalizing the role of police. Checkpoints should be eliminated, as should fees for basic services such as applications for licenses. A corollary to this is the necessity to pay police a living wage. If international police fail to obtain results in police reform, efforts to educate the public about

democratic policing might succeed in mobilizing civil society to demand reform, but they are unlikely to empower them to effect such change.

Effective, impartial, and ethical performance is the most effective way to educate the public about the role of police in a democracy. To help ensure that police performance is not at odds with the rhetoric of the public education campaign, the following measures may be effective in educating the public about the role of police in a democracy and effectively transforming lawless rule into rule of law:

- Establish community advisory boards to give the local community a role in selection of candidates to be police officers, setting standards they are to uphold, and the manner in which they are trained. Establish community crime watch and citizen police academies to develop local partners and new leadership within the local community.
- Community engagements described in the next section are recommended as a starting point. Well-established relationships can lead to community cohesion and accountability in support of a properly functioning rule of law system. Civilian oversight mechanisms have pros and cons. They can be costly and unsustainable. The cost could divert funds away from training and education and the establishment of a well-staffed and organized Internal Affairs office with an early warning system that is designed to support and promote the overall well-being and professionalism of the law enforcement officer. They can be more reactive than preventive in nature and a political feel-good measure for the community but may not necessarily change the overall relationship with law enforcement.
- Seek out human rights organizations (international and local) and encourage them to work together to advocate for democratic policing that is oriented toward community service and accountability to the citizenry. Work with them to establish open lines of communication with police leadership that will provide the foundation for their involvement in advisory and accountability structures. If there are no local human rights organizations, work with international human rights groups to encourage their development.
- Work with partners in the international donor and NGO communities to get the message out that the police should be part of the community and responsible and accountable to the community. Identify educational, developmental and humanitarian projects that the police collaborate with to educate the public about the role of the new democratic police force.
- Work with the press to get the message out on the use of force policy and the primacy of community service for police. Hire experienced public affairs professionals to deal with media relations at the ministry level and in the major media markets across the country. Conduct regular press conferences and, when important events occur, convene ad hoc sessions to discuss major cases and highlight the new police role.
- Engage the youth in the public education campaign through the educational system. Train "school liaison officers" whose specific function it is to maintain contact with schools, explain police practices, stress their availability and address security issues that students may have. Arrange visits by school children to police facilities.

2. Establish a supportive relationship between the police and the public

The most effective means of educating the public about how to be policed in a democracy is through exposure to and interaction with police who respect democratic principles. Community policing is designed to engender a mutually supportive relationship through the following practices:

- Develop committees comprised of local political leaders, community elders, business owners, school officials, student representatives, and social workers to meet regularly with police to identify local public order and individual safety concerns, collectively develop solutions, implement alternatives, and assess results.
- Assign community police specialist to specific neighborhoods, villages and towns with the responsibility to patrol, become familiar with the people, and respond to their needs.
- Live in and become part of the community where the police station is located. Organize visits to the local police station to let the public talk to police and observe what they do.
- Patrol on foot or bicycle whenever possible.
- Visit people in their homes and places of work to develop and cultivate a bond of trust between the people and the police. Assist victims and those who are potential victims of crime, especially minority group members and the elderly, by attempting to visit these people to assure them of some degree of security by your presence and attention.
- Visit schools and speak to students and teachers about democratic policing and the way it is addressing local concerns, including peaceful relations between identity groups that had been associated with the internal conflict. Solicit feedback.
- If you have a specific skill, such as sports, volunteer to coach or organize community events involving the police (e.g., soccer games). Sponsor activities that are helpful for the local community (e.g., sporting events, charitable activities, environment protection).
- Undertake surveys of public confidence in complaining to the police and sponsor tests of the police complaint mechanism to see if complaints are readily accepted and lead to appropriate action.

Start only those initiatives that can be sustained after you leave. International advisors and monitors will need to inculcate in the hierarchy and rank and file of the local police force an enduring commitment to building a bond of trust and working relationship with people.

3. Educating the community about how to hold the police accountable

If the community does not have experience holding the police accountable, and they neither expect nor enjoy transparency, the first two steps described above will be crucial to establishing the conditions under which a functioning accountability system for police misconduct can be instituted. Public education cannot substitute for unwillingness by the police to be held accountable.

Among the concepts that need to be understood in educating the public about how to hold the police accountable and make them responsible for upholding democratic principles, the rule of law, and human rights are the following:

- What is public service? How can I obtain public service?
 - What are my rights and responsibilities as a citizen and what are the roles and functions of police officers? Courts? Prisons?
 - How do I know when the police are abusing their authority or violating the principle of public service? When should I assert my rights?
 - How do I report police misconduct? (It should be possible to submit complaints anonymously, without going to the police in person, and the results of investigations should be made public.)
 - Who can I go to for help if I fear that I will face police retaliation?
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Compilation of Resources:

This Consolidated Response draws from many of the following resources, which are useful reference tools for policing practitioners. All listed documents with a hyperlink are uploaded to the INPROL Digital Library.

- [Toolbox for Implementing Restorative Justice and Advancing Community Policing](#), U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Community Oriented Policing (1999)
- [Police Reform White Paper: Building Communities, Beating Crime - A Better Police Service for the 21st Century](#), United Kingdom Home Office (2004)
- [Capacity Building Training for Citizen Advisory Groups](#), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), POLIS (2005)
- [Community Based Policing](#), Art Crosby, RCMP, (1995)
- David Bayley, *Changing the Guard: Developing Democratic Police Abroad*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006)

Other resources

- US DOJ OJJDP Promising Strategies to Reduce Gun Violence
http://ojjdp.ncjrs.org/pubs/gun_violence/contents.html
- Everyday Democracy, <http://www.everyday-democracy.org/en/Issue.8.aspx>
- Good Practices in Building Police-Public Partnerships (OSCE),
<http://www.osce.org/item/31851.html>
- Community-based Policing Approaches,
http://www.ottawapolice.ca/en/serving_ottawa/community_centres/App5_Succ...
- Common Community Policing Strategies,
<http://www.cops.usdoj.gov/txt/e05060064.txt>
- The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces,
<http://www.dcaf.ch/activities/programmes.cfm>
- Commission for Complaints Against the RCMP, <http://www.cpc-cpp.gc.ca/>
- "Safeguarding a Viable Peace: Institutionalizing the Rule of Law," by Halvor A. Hartz and Laura Mercean, in *The Quest for Viable Peace: International*

Intervention and Strategies for Conflict Transformation, Jock Covey, Michael Dziedzic and Leonard Hawley (eds.) (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press and the Association of the United States Army, 2005), pp. 157-204.

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