



## **The Ittefaq Welfare Organization (IWO) and its role for Peace**

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The need of the Peace Committee was felt deeply when four suicide attacks were carried out in the area claiming hundreds of precious lives. Furthermore, the influx of Internally Displaced People (IDPs) in the area increased the risk as there was no mechanism to discriminate between the peace-finders and peace-exploiters. This situation threatened the peace in the area and as a result the cases of kidnapping, target killing, and other criminal activities raised enormously.



Looking to the prevailing situation in the area, it was imperative to focus on peacekeeping initiatives. IWO called a Grand Jirga and discussed the situation wherein it was decided to form peacekeeping committees to secure the peace in



the area while working with the government law enforcement agencies.

At Union Council Sherkot level, the Peace Committee is comprised of 150 members. There are five major villages in the Union Council and each village has formed a Village Organization (VO) at its village level. These VOs are the composite entities from the apex body formed at the Union Council level called



Local Support Organization with the title of Ittefaq Welfare Organization (IWO). There are 20 to 25 General Body members of each VO, who are registered as the members of the Peace



Committee with the local police station. The local Police Station has endorsed them as peacekeeping civilians, who work shoulder to shoulder with the police force whenever any untoward situation arises in their respective villages. The Peacekeeping Committee was later on linked with the district Peace Committee.

### **Performance of the Peace Committee:**

The Peace Committee has a number of success stories, which has brought peace in letter and spirit in the Union Council where there is militancy and where other crimes are at a peak in the surrounding areas. Some of the stories are described below:

1. Two years back, Mr. Hesiat Ullah Khan, Deputy Director Agriculture FATA, was on his way from district Kohat to his hometown situated in district Hangu. A group of kidnappers, near village Chakarkot bala, ambushed him. The police being less in number sought the help of the Peace Committee. The members of the Peace Committee came out with their weapons and chased

the kidnapers. After engaging in combat, the kidnapers left Mr. Hesiya Ullah Khan and escaped; however not before injuring him.

2. In June 2011, some thieves belonging to the Orakzai Agency snatched livestock including cows, goats and sheep from village Jabi. The people of village Jabi contacted the Peace Committee. The Peace Committee came into action; went out to the outskirts of the area, and blocked all the gateways. The volunteers of the Peacekeeping Committee arrested the snatchers by ambushing them and handed them over to the police.
3. In February 2011, three kidnapers went into village Sherkot and tried to kidnap a young girl, aged 18 years. They grabbed her from a nearby graveyard and forcibly put her in a car. Meanwhile, the parents of the girl informed the Peace Committee. The Peace Committee members rushed towards the spot and informed the other members of the surrounding villages who blocked all the anticipated gateways. They grabbed the kidnapers and freed the girl. Later on, the kidnapers were presented to the Grand Jirga. The Jirga fined them Rs. 500,000 and handed over the kidnapers to the police. The money was later on given to the affected family.
4. During the "Sanaha-e-Baluchistan", the religious and political parties blocked the road leading to



district Hangu, Orakzai Agency, Kuram Agency and district Kohat. This caused an immense problem in the mobility of the people and especially affected patients, school and college-going students and other workers wanted to go for their duties. All types of efforts made by the district administration failed. Finally, the district administration asked for help from the Peace Committee. The Peace Committee conducted a dialogue with the protestors and used its influence. The matter was resolved after 72 hours, for which the district administration awarded the Peace Committee with a commendation letter and a shield.

### Other activities of the Peace Committee:

1. The Peace Committee plays its role during the different events of Muharram Ul Haram. During these days all the Peace Committee members receive a special card from the police department



for working to maintain peace in the area on behalf of the government. This is an interesting situation as the police confine themselves to the boundaries of the building of the police station and the Peace Committee members are fully entrusted with the responsibility to maintain peace in their area.

2. On special days like Juma Prayers, Tarveeh prayers, Jumat Ul Wida, Eid Ul Fitar and Eid Ul Azha, the Peace Committee performs their duties at mosques and other sensitive locations while displaying their official cards to the public.



3. Women members of the Peace Committees also come into action and participate as women guards at the points where women perform their religious rituals during the special days.
4. The Peace Committee has also played a proactive role in resolving local disputes usually linked to situations regarding land, women and money. A number of such issues have been resolved; most of them were running for years and several have lost their beloved ones in the result of such enormities.