



RESILIENCE

Martial Arts for Peace

Gaziantep in southeast Turkey two months after the devastating February 6 earthquakes. Most of the debris from the destroyed buildings in the city center has been cleared away. Smaller aftershocks can be felt every now and then. Life is slowly returning to the city and the number of students in the local martial arts school of Martial Arts for Peace is increasing again. However, overcoming trauma on an individual and on a societal level will still take a long time. According to UNICEF 850,000 children in the earthquake area are homeless. They must endure with their families in shelters and tent camps and deal with the loss of friends and family members. Many children are in shock and traumatized by what they have experienced.

Resilience is the ability to cope with difficult life situations and to emerge stronger from them. It's about being resilient and remaining able to act even in crisis situations. Martial Arts for Peace promotes resilience in children and young people through regular martial arts training. Learning physical techniques and overcoming pain builds resilience and endurance. At the same time, confidence in one's own abilities is strengthened, and a positive attitude is developed, which can be helpful in overcoming challenges. When working with target groups in the region affected by the earthquakes, the training can help to overcome trauma and become more self-confident and resilient again.

Jasmin Dirinpur was in Gaziantep on the 9th floor of a 13th floor residential building when at 04:17 in the morning the earth shook twice in a row. The epicenter of the first quake was only a few kilometers away. The tremors were so strong and long-lasting that for a moment she thought she would not survive them either. She was able to get to safety and was unharmed. As time went on, the scale of the disaster became clearer. Countless buildings have either collapsed completely or suffered irreparable damage. These are hard and sad times for the people in the affected area, which is about two thirds the size of the Federal Republic of

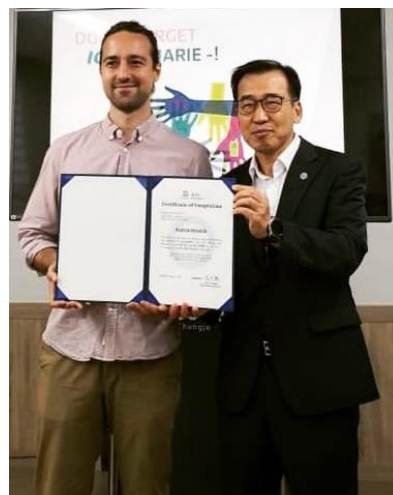
Germany. People, some of whom have lost so many family and friends under the rubble that, as one put it, they "don't know who to miss."

The founding history of Martial Arts for Peace non-profit GmbH begins in Gaziantep with a workshop in 2018. The co-founders: Natalia Grybos and Martin Minarik were on site at the Turkish-Syrian border to facilitate Karate and Taekwondo workshops for trainers from refugee and host communities. The aim was to convey the socio-educational potential of martial arts and methods of training to the participants.

“Our programs promote social interaction, resilience, and community involvement. Thereby important are body experience, sensory perception, self-reflection, and interaction.”

At the time, Jasmin Dirinpur was an employee of the education program of the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH in Gaziantep and was responsible for the cooperation with the German Olympic Sports Federation (DOSB). She had the idea of founding a non-governmental organization that offers trainers a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience; and that supports them in reaching larger target groups together and having a sustainable impact. With Martin Minarik, Natalia Grybos, and Ömer Tibik, she brought three active and experienced martial artists on board as shareholders. The founding team is united by a passion for "sport-for-development" in general; and by their belief in the potential of martial arts to support people in difficult life situations and to help them discover and develop their strengths.

The co-founders in action: Natalia sparring with students of the Syrian Karate trainer Mousa El Ahmet in Gaziantep; Martin during his research stay with UNESCO ICM in Chungju South Korea; Ömer at a martial arts training session with people with disabilities; Jasmin (2nd from left) in a discussion with experts on the topic "Sport-for-Development"





“We design martial arts lessons in such a way that an understanding of discipline, respect and fairness is conveyed. These values can help children and young people to act more prudently and refrain from violence in conflict situations.”

The Martial Arts for Peace approach is based on transformational education theory. Accordingly, people change through experiences from different walks of life and educational processes. These changes can initially take different directions.

With the help of movement practices specific to martial arts, Martial Arts for Peace promotes the peace ability of children and young people. Body experience, sensory perception, self-reflection, and interaction are thereby important. By systematically practicing certain movement sequences, a series of sustainably transformed values and attitudes can be developed as a process.

Neither martial arts nor education are peacemaking in and of themselves. Rather, a peace-promoting staging of the movement setting, and its verbalization must be ensured.

The following aesthetic educational potential is used:

The playful moment

The bodily movement

Togetherness whilst competing against each other.

The perception of oneself as well as of the other person in the performance of movement always takes place within our peace education framework. It rejects violence as a solution to conflicts and relies on identifying the causes of conflicts and building competencies that will bring about a peaceful solution.



“Martial arts can serve as an outlet for negative emotions such as anger and aggression. Having such an opportunity to express negative emotions in a controlled environment can make program participants less likely to express those emotions through violent acts.”



So far, the regional focus of the work has been on the south-east of Türkiye. There, Martial Arts for Peace has built up a network of Turkish and Syrian trainers from various martial arts disciplines. Since it was founded, the non-governmental organization has continued to develop and has already been able to support many children and young people in difficult life situations. The programming also includes self-defense courses for women, innovative newer sports such as chess boxing, and martial arts classes for people with disabilities.

An important milestone in organizational development was the successful organization of the Martial Arts Open School in August 2022 on behalf of UNESCO International Center for Martial Arts (ICM) and the subsequent signing of a memorandum of understanding regarding a long-term cooperation with the strategically important partner from South Korea, who shares a similar vision.

With the help of financial support from the German-Turkish Youth Bridge, bridge-building projects between Turkish and German trainers could be implemented. In addition to the exchange of sport-specific expertise, cultural barriers were broken down and understanding and empathy between different groups was promoted. Martial Arts for Peace would like to expand and strengthen these connections and especially the network and program in Germany to reach even more people and bring about positive changes. It is still necessary to receive financial support for this, be it through public funding, foundations, or private donations.





<https://martialartsforpeace.org/get-involved>