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Peacemakers in Action: Dishani Jayaweera in Sri Lanka

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A two-part episode of Peacemakers in Action

The Peacemakers in Action Network is an interreligious alliance of spiritual leaders and scholars, who are motivated by their religious faith to arbitrate disputes in conflict zones throughout the world. The *Peacemakers in Action* podcast is one place where these arbitrators tell their stories.

The responsibility of sharing power is one of humanity's greatest dilemmas in a diverse world made up of multicultural societies. This is a problem the Tanenbaum Center's Peacemakers confront daily, and it is central to its two-part podcast episode which focuses on the aftermath of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

Part 1: "Conflict Is a Flower"



Source: Zane Lee via Unsplash.

For anyone who has doubted their ability to effect change in a complex world, Dishani Jayaweera's story just might allay those doubts. In ["Conflict Is a Flower: Dishani Jayaweera,"](#) one peacemaker discusses the challenges of the Sri Lankan Civil War.

Waged from 1983 to 2009, the war left an indelible impact on Dishani Jayaweera, who was a teenager when it began. In this first case-study episode of the *PIA* podcast, Jayaweera reflects on what she witnessed—both the conflict itself as well as the efforts her family and community made toward winning peace. As co-founder of the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, an organization that played a role in ending the war, Jayaweera discusses how she fought to maintain that hard-earned peace in the aftermath of the conflict.

Jayaweera’s approach to peacemaking involves the painstaking work of forging connections on “the hyper-localized level.” She details the formation of the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation, as well as the challenges that came when funders attempted to compromise her vision for interethnic and interreligious healing.

Part II: “More on Sri Lanka”



Source: Hendrick Cornelissen via Unsplash

In [“More on Dishani and Sri Lanka,”](#) Rev. Susan Hayward of the Harvard Divinity School expounds upon the history of the Sri Lankan Civil War and analyzes the Centre for Peacebuilding and Reconciliation’s efforts to end it. At the center of the civil war was a rebellion against the Government of Sri Lanka from the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) that erupted after years of violent persecution against the Eelam Tamil people by the Sinhalese political establishment. In addition to the ethnic differences between the two populations, the conflict was also underlined by religious differences: the majority of the Sinhalese people practice Buddhism, while the Eelam

Tamils are predominantly Hindu.

Rev. Hayward explains the history of that war as well as the challenges of sharing power in multiethnic and multireligious societies like Sri Lanka. Her analysis also sheds additional light on the work of Jayaweera, the featured guest of the *PIA* podcast's [previous episode](#).

The Peacemakers in Action Network is an alliance of people motivated by their religious faith to arbitrate disputes in conflict zones throughout the world. The Tanenbaum Center for Interreligious Understanding trains the peacemakers and publishes the two platforms by which the peacemakers tell their stories: the Peacemakers in Action podcast and a series of books by the same name.