

Building Public Confidence in Police Through Civilian Oversight

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Since 1997, the Ford Foundation's Program on Peace and Social Justice and the Vera Institute of Justice have worked to foster collaboration among law enforcement officials and non-governmental organizations around the world that are working to advance democratic policing. This paper is one of several to emerge from that ongoing project.

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Introduction

Boris Pustinstev, Chair of the St. Petersburg-based Citizens' Watch, recently described how it is an entirely new idea in Russia for citizens to have the right to know what the police are doing and to demand appropriate behavior. "We're at the beginning of a long road," he said, "because the public is not yet ready to accept police officers as their servants and protectors." While the police in Russia are making efforts to build trust between themselves and citizens—for example, some stationhouses now display brochures that describe police procedures and citizens' rights—the process, Pustinstev said, is slow.

Boris Pustinstev made these remarks at an international meeting on civilian oversight of police held in May 2002 in Los Angeles, California and sponsored by the Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC), the Vera Institute of Justice, and the Ford Foundation. The meeting brought together police officials and those who oversee their work, some from elsewhere within government and others from non-governmental organizations. While Pustinstev was speaking of Russia, it was clear to those in attendance that his remarks about a citizen's right to know about and to demand respectful and effective policing applied to all the other countries represented: Brazil, the Czech Republic, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, South Africa, and the United States. Indeed, it may be the permanent lot of police in democracies that the public vacillates between seeing the police at times as protectors and at other times as oppressors. Both the police and the citizenry must continually strive to build mutual trust. Progress toward this elusive goal is the common enterprise of democratic governments and citizens around the world, making the exchange of views and experiences across national boundaries particularly valuable.

This paper summarizes the views and experiences shared during the May 2002 meeting in Los Angeles, a discussion unusual because of the diversity of national experiences represented and the relatively equal participation of senior police officials and individuals committed to civilian oversight. By organizing this paper around the themes discussed, we hope that readers in other countries who are engaged in police work or overseeing the police will recognize some of their own dilemmas and benefit from the insights of the meeting's participants. (The names and affiliations of the participants are listed in an appendix.) We hope, in short, to connect the conversation in Los Angeles to a larger, ongoing process around the world that is nurturing democratic policing and improving how police treat people.

I. From Crisis to Control: The Emergence of Civilian Oversight

In both new and more mature democratic societies, citizens are putting increased pressure on police not only to control crime but also to treat everyone they contact fairly and with respect. A continuing challenge, therefore, is to create practical mechanisms for citizens to routinely oversee and influence the conduct of law enforcement, including the manner in which police exercise their powers to arrest, interrogate, and use lethal and non-lethal force.

In countries, states, or cities where there is a commitment to democratic governance, civilian oversight appears to arise in response to a specific crisis of confidence in the police. Until such a crisis occurs, democratic societies tend to leave police to look after themselves. The crisis in confidence may take the form of a specific and highly publicized event or trend. The prototypical example in the United States was the Rodney King incident in 1991, where officers of the Los Angeles Police Department were recorded on a bystander's videotape beating an African-American motorist senseless with their batons. The incident launched a decade of focused attention and action on police reform in the United States. Similarly, in Brazil public outrage over the large number of deaths in police custody, particularly in the states of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, led to the creation of *Ouvidorias de Polícia* (Police Ombudsmen's offices) in nine Brazilian states.

A crisis in confidence may also come, as in Peru, in reaction to a period of undemocratic rule in which the authority of the police was abused for political ends. Officers functioning under the authoritarian government of President Fujimori were successful in combating the Shining Path. But according to General Enrique Yépez Dávalos, the militaristic policing style they adopted to fight terrorism left local citizens equally vulnerable to crime and abuse by the officers who should have been protecting them. As a result, the police have found it difficult to shed this negative image and to gain the trust and confidence of the public. To address the problem, the Ministry of the Interior began a radical reorganization of the police in October 2001 that includes establishing ombudsmen's offices and creating neighborhood committees to improve public security.¹ Similarly, in Nigeria the transition from military dictatorship to democracy has required changing the image of the police from a tool of an oppressive government to a public service agency. To facilitate this shift, national lawmakers reconstituted the Police Service Commission. Most governments have two unconnected agencies—one to punish misconduct and one to reward good performance—but the commission has both responsibilities, making it unusual and potentially a very effective form of civilian oversight.

In South Africa, the constitutional mandate for the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) was a central component of the country's transition to democracy. According to ICD Executive Director Karen McKenzie, the history of the South African

¹ The Ministry of the Interior has established two ombudsmen's offices. The Police Ombudsman, to receive complaints from police officers, and the People's Ombudsman, to receive complaints from the public.

police as a key instrument in enforcing apartheid means that the ICD has an obligation to provide all members of previously disenfranchised communities with an opportunity to report any insult or injury suffered at the hands of the police and to know that their complaints will be taken seriously.

In some contexts, mechanisms for civilian oversight may develop outside government. The Kenyan Human Rights Commission, a non-governmental organization that currently monitors some aspects of police behavior, is a typical example. But civilian oversight can also arise organically from the concerns of even a small group of citizens. In Russia, for example, widespread police involvement in drug-trafficking spurred residents in one city to take on the problem themselves. They created a special foundation called A City Without Drugs, bought television cameras, and drove through the streets filming officers in the process of selling drugs. Then they showed the films to members of the National Anti-Drug Committee. With the committee's support, the films aired on national television, sparking demands for parliamentary hearings and focusing attention on the problem of narco-corruption in other cities.

Pramod Kumar, of the Institute of Communication and Development in Chandigarh, India, describes this kind of citizen organizing as “incident-related mobilization,” in which a specific event creates a ground swell of interest and energy, but one that dissipates over time. Yet before the Russian citizens lost interest in the problem of narco-corruption, the campaign begun by A City Without Drugs evolved into a mechanism that engages citizens across the country in holding officers accountable for misconduct. Hotlines in four regions of the country—several more are in the works—give citizens a safe means to report officers who are selling drugs. These reports go to the police and to a non-governmental organization.

If mechanisms for civilian oversight develop in response to particular historical and political conditions, their role and priorities also evolve as these conditions change. In the absence of a specialized civilian oversight institution in Kenya, for example, the Kenyan Human Rights Commission (KHRC), a non-governmental advocacy organization with a broad mission, has been documenting complaints against the police, running public campaigns to promote police reform, and educating officers about human rights. According to Deputy Director Wambui Kimathi, these activities ensure that institutions like the police submit to what's known in Kiswahili as “kiti moto”—public scrutiny, or literally, the “hot seat.” Kenya's current process of constitutional review provides an opportunity to establish an organization dedicated solely to police oversight with the authority and resources to investigate complaints against the police, something the KHRC cannot do. Fundamental political shifts like those taking shape in Kenya offer opportunities for citizens and police leaders to jointly develop new, more efficient forms of civilian oversight.

II. Blending Internal and External Oversight

By definition, civilian oversight involves people outside the police gaining access to previously non-public or secret internal police processes in order to hold law enforcement accountable for its actions, policies, and priorities. In practice, however, there is always a division of responsibility between *external* review and law enforcement's own *internal* review systems. According to Merrick Bobb, director of the Police Assessment Resource Center (PARC) in Los Angeles and monitor of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department, there may even be aspects of the oversight process that police departments are better equipped to handle than non-police organizations. He observes, for example, that while agencies outside the police can be capable of investigating low-level complaints, reviewing fatalities and other serious incidents requires the greater resources, expertise, and structure that a police agency's internal affairs division offers. Yet because it's always difficult for any police officer to judge another officer—making internal investigations susceptible to bias and distortion —Bobb argues that these investigations in particular should be carefully reviewed and judged for objectivity, thoroughness, and fairness by an agency or group operating outside the police.

Bobb's example illustrates the relative strengths and weaknesses of internal and external review, which, when fostered appropriately, can complement each other. Equally important, many advocates of civilian oversight argue that there will never be enough resources to support external oversight alone. Creating false expectations about what an oversight agency can achieve only leads to public frustration and disenchantment. These concerns have convinced some people that civil society should play an active role in strengthening law enforcement's own controls, rather than attempting to supplant them.

David Bruce, a researcher at the Centre for Studies in Violence and Reconciliation in South Africa, believes this task is particularly important in emerging democracies where police typically have very poor controls over their own behavior and external oversight mechanisms are generally under-funded. Rather than trying to become an alternative to internal review, Bruce argues, oversight mechanisms that operate outside the police should use their limited resources to help law enforcement agencies establish systems to monitor and control their own behavior. The challenge, he adds, is to form civilian oversight mechanisms that acknowledge and respect the expertise of police and the complex challenges of fighting crime.

An interesting experiment along these lines is taking place in Los Angeles. The County Board of Supervisors recently created the Office of Independent Review, staffed by a group of six civil rights lawyers who are empowered to participate in and help direct the sheriff department's internal investigations of complaints against its officers. The lawyers then recommend a disposition to the sheriff and can also recommend discipline if warranted. The Office of Independent Review was proposed initially by Sheriff Lee Baca. Policing experts in the United States are closely watching this unusual blend of internal and external review to see if it succeeds.

III. Setting Priorities

Defining, and thereby limiting, the responsibilities of any civilian oversight mechanism is both a fundamental task and a real challenge. The involvement of civil society in police matters rarely emerges through a consensus among police, government leaders, and non-governmental advocates about the value and functions of such an intervention. More often, civilian oversight is the product of struggles and compromises between those who support it and those who resist it, and between competing visions of how this kind of oversight should function.

Deciding on an appropriate role for civilian oversight—setting priorities—also has important consequences for the allocation and internal coordination of limited resources. There are many possible strategies. An agency might limit its activities to a particular type or class of police misconduct, for example. It might divert certain complaints—such as those that do not involve the use of force—for mediation. It might record all complaints for later pattern analysis but then refer them to the police for investigation. Another way to stretch the capacity of civilian oversight is through the skillful use of other resources. For example, the South African Independent Complaints Directorate uses the government’s information services as well as traditional tribal hierarchies to spread the word about its services, particularly in hard-to-reach rural areas.

Within this complex political and fiscal context, it’s useful to consider some of the major tensions around defining the scope of civilian oversight.

Responding to Complaints vs. Analyzing Trends

Most civilian oversight operates by receiving and responding to complaints against police from members of the public. Underlying this approach is the view that punishing individual officers for unethical behavior has the broader impact of deterring misconduct among other officers and improving police organizations. This has obvious parallels with the view that crime in general can be reduced by the sure threat of punishment. However, as is true for crime generally, deterring misconduct through punishment is only one way to deal with it. The other general approach involves working with police agencies to identify and resolve systemic problems related to management, supervision, training, or other aspects of law enforcement that cause or perpetuate misconduct.

To better understand policing trends and policies, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors created the role of special counsel to investigate and monitor how the sheriff’s department manages the risks of misconduct. Merrick Bobb, who currently fills the position of special counsel, argues that by prioritizing pattern analysis, civilian review can foster practical reforms that produce larger reductions in misconduct than are possible solely by responding to individual complaints. As special counsel, Bobb investigated the high number of shootings by officers assigned to the sheriff’s Century Station in a crime-ridden, largely black and Latino neighborhood in south Los Angeles.

This involved reviewing documents, interviewing staff, and observing police practices. He found that great demands were being placed on relatively inexperienced officers without sufficient supervision, factors that contributed to the higher volume of shootings. Bobb's findings and additional investigation by the sheriff's department led to new standards for pursuing suspects and changes in how recruits are trained.

Close examination of the pool of complaints against officers can also reveal key trends in police behavior. For example, researchers at the Center for Studies of Public Security and Citizenship in Rio de Janeiro who are evaluating ombudsmen's offices in five Brazilian states were surprised to learn that complaints filed in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo more often involved the civil police than the military police, even after accounting for the different sizes of each police force. This kind of information can help the ombudsman and law enforcement leaders in their state craft reforms that have the greatest impact on misconduct. Equipping the ombudsmen's offices with the resources and expertise to maintain and analyze their own data would promote more active and potentially more effective oversight.

Taking Complaints from Officers

Most oversight agencies that receive and respond to complaints work with members of the general public who have been insulted, injured, or just poorly served by the police. But these agencies may discover that police officers want a forum outside the department to express their own grievances. This is happening in Rio de Janeiro, and the police ombudsmen's office has started accepting their complaints. According to Julita Lemgruber, director of the Center for Studies of Public Security and Citizenship, some members of the military police surveyed in Rio feel that the ombudsman's office provides a venue where lower-ranked officers can safely voice complaints against their superiors and expose problems in police management. There is a potential danger in doing this, however. A civilian oversight agency that's trying to collaborate with police to advance reforms may not be able to keep complaints from officers confidential. In Peru, the Ministry of the Interior has taken a slightly different approach and one that may offer more protection for officers. A newly established Office of the Police Ombudsman, which is headed by a civilian, is designed specifically to handle complaints from the police.

Investigating Allegations and Determining Punishment

Civilian agencies that oversee the police differ widely in terms of their involvement in the process of investigating complaints against officers and determining punishment. Choices about how involved to be in the investigation are influenced by the agency's capacity and legal authority—whether it has the power to subpoena witnesses and documents, hold public hearings, and provide legal advice to complainants. Some agencies assume

primary responsibility for conducting investigations. At the other extreme are agencies that lack the authority or resources to conduct any investigations. But perhaps most common are agencies that monitor the police department's investigations and only occasionally launch their own inquiries—usually in response to allegations of very serious misconduct or when the department's investigation appears incomplete or faulty. Similarly, some oversight agencies have no influence over how misconduct is punished, while others can make recommendations, and a few have even more authority.

The state ombudsmen in Brazil represent one extreme. None of the nine ombudsmen are permitted to investigate alleged incidents of misconduct, and they have no influence over whether and how to discipline officers who engage in misconduct. They do, however, review investigations conducted by the police *corregedorias* (internal affairs divisions) and can press for additional fact finding. According to Julita Lemgruber, director of the Center for Studies of Public Security and Citizenship and former ombudswoman for the state of Rio de Janeiro, these restrictions undermine public confidence in the ombudsmen and severely limit their ability to respond effectively to complaints. For Lemgruber, the next logical step in Brazil is giving ombudsmen a bigger role in investigating complaints and punishing officers. Specifically, she and the center have recommended that the ombudsmen be given the legal authority and resources to set deadlines for internal investigations, determine when an investigation is complete, investigate serious cases of misconduct, and recommend punishment.

At the other extreme in terms of investigations is South Africa's Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD). The ICD is required to investigate all deaths that are related to police action and may investigate any other alleged misconduct. In addition to other legal powers, ICD investigators can make arrests. While the ICD currently refers many less serious complaints back to the police for investigation, ICD director Karen McKenzie hopes that by 2005, her agency will be able to investigate all complaints. Her plans have been challenged by those who believe the ICD will never have enough funding to conduct a large number of investigations in an efficient manner. Following an investigation, the ICD may refer the case to the prosecutor's office, which decides whether to file criminal charges. The ICD may also recommend how the police department should discipline the officer involved.

The Human Rights Commissions (HRCs) in India represent a middle course. They monitor the investigations that law enforcement conduct and launch their own investigations only when the police department's inquiry is inadequate. The HRC then recommends punishment for the officer and/or interim compensation for the victim.

Merrick Bobb, monitor of the Los Angeles County Sheriff's Department and director of PARC, has pointed out that when oversight agencies get involved in investigating allegations of misconduct and determining punishment, they are required to make judgments about both the officers and the citizens involved. In order for those judgments to be accepted as legitimate by both the police and the public, the oversight agency must

be widely regarded as impartial and objective. And to achieve such status, the agency has to function in a deliberate and pragmatic fashion, resisting impulses to advocate wider social change or to amplify the public outrage that led to its creation.

The moral authority of the oversight entity is partly derived from the experience and integrity of its members. The “Protection of Human Rights Act 1993,” which constituted the national and state Human Rights Commissions in India, states that the chairperson of the national HRC must be a retired chief justice of the Supreme Court and the chairperson of a state HRC must be a retired chief justice of a high court. Members of the national and state HRCs are appointed by the president of India and by the governor of the state, respectively. According to Mr. Sankar Sen, senior fellow at the Institute of Social Sciences in New Delhi, the HRCs have sufficient moral and political sway to be effective. Experience in West Bengal provides good evidence for his claim. According to B. P. Singh, additional director general of the West Bengal Human Rights Commission, 97 percent of that commission’s recommendations have been implemented.

One of the major goals of civilian oversight is to make law enforcement more transparent, particularly in how these agencies respond to officers who abuse their authority. The ability of a civilian oversight agency to effectively communicate the investigation of an allegation and the results of that process to the complainant and the public—and to the police if the oversight agency is conducting the investigation—could be just as important as the actual resolution. In a survey of residents of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo who filed complaints against the police, 62 percent were not satisfied by the work done by the ombudsmen’s office. This is hardly surprising since 56 percent of the people surveyed didn’t even know the results of their complaint. By keeping complainants informed about the status of their cases, the ombudsmen’s offices might be able to significantly improve how the public views their work and the police.²

Alternative forms of resolution may also play an important role. Several review panels in the United States, including those in New York City and Minneapolis, try to resolve complaints that do not involve the use of force through mediation, rather than the more costly route of launching an investigation and possibly bringing the case to court. Less expensive responses like mediation allow oversight agencies to efficiently process more cases. Involving the complainant and the officer in the entire process of resolving the allegation also makes the process transparent and perhaps more satisfying for both parties, which should build public confidence in the police as a democratic institution. Of course as an oversight agency becomes better able to satisfy citizens and word spreads, the number of complaints will rise. This in turn puts more pressure on the agency’s limited resources.

² The survey was conducted by the Center for Studies of Public Security and Citizenship. Interestingly, satisfaction surveys administered to police revealed that while 67 percent of the officers knew the outcome of the complaint against them, 87 percent had a negative image of the Ombudsman’s office. Thus, while the outcome of investigations was communicated effectively to the police, the process of civilian oversight continued to cause them anxiety.

Expanding Civilian Oversight Beyond Misconduct

In some countries, the scope of civilian oversight extends beyond police misconduct. As mentioned previously, the Police Service Commission in Nigeria, which reports directly to the president, not only oversees discipline but all other aspects of policing as well, including appointments and promotions. In Los Angeles, the city charter empowers the Police Commission—a group of five civilians appointed by the mayor with the advice and consent of the city council—to formulate overall policy for the Los Angeles Police Department. The commission also plays a significant role in appointing the chief of police by interviewing all candidates and narrowing the field to three finalists for the mayor to choose from. And across the United States in both large and small departments, regular meetings between police and residents provide a way for civilians to influence local policing priorities. Choosing to expand the scope of civilian oversight beyond responding to misconduct, however, requires combining different expertise within a single organization.

IV. Maintaining Independence While Collaborating with Police

A continuous challenge for civil society is to engage the police in collaborative reform initiatives, while at the same time remaining independent and impartial. By maintaining sufficient distance from the police, oversight mechanisms are better able to preserve their clarity and objectivity and keep the oversight process itself from becoming corrupted by the interests or culture of the police. At the same time, an oversight agency's ability to investigate complaints and monitor police investigations depends on collaboration with the police, which can become impossible if relationships are fraught.

To build better working relations between the Independent Complaints Directorate (ICD) and the South African police, ICD Director Karen McKenzie began offering to serve on police committees, such as the police management forum and the policy-making forum. Her participation in the work of these committees has led to other collaborations between the ICD and the police. In Gauteng province, for example, the police commissioner asked ICD staff to accompany officers on their anti-crime operations and raids—showing that the police have a real commitment to protecting human rights. Beyond assisting police, these kinds of activities also help the ICD understand the exigencies of police work and the concerns of the officers. For example, the ICD has learned about the high number of officers killed for their weapons each year and is exploring how the agency can help the police prevent a crime that causes significant anxiety among officers.

In Czechoslovakia, the Czech Helsinki Committee plays an active role in working with police to develop policy manuals and training programs on human rights. According

to the committee's deputy director, Pavel Bilek, these initiatives have made the police more open to collaboration with other NGOs. The Centre for Law Enforcement Education (CLEEN), a Nigerian NGO that partners with police to reform law enforcement practices, takes a similar approach. CLEEN's Police-Community Partnership Project, for example, provides a forum for regular interaction between residents and the police outside the context of arrests. These examples of collaboration between civilian oversight agencies and the police are not simply a means to an end, but are themselves a form of oversight.

Working alongside the police does not mean forgiving misconduct or lessening the rigor of civilian oversight. But it does require oversight agencies to consider the perspectives of law enforcement, particularly the shortcomings and difficulties of police work, such as poor pay, training that is frequently inadequate, and the high stress and anxiety associated with life-threatening employment conditions. The lesson: focusing solely on misconduct may result in a police force that feels unfairly criticized and is therefore unwilling to engage in the kind of collaboration that is necessary to advance lasting reforms. The Nairobi Central Business District Association (NCBDA) was established by private businesses to advance the safety of citizens and the health of business in Nairobi, which depends on effective law enforcement. One of the NCBDA's current projects is a trust fund to improve the living and working conditions of officers. Other projects have used private-sector funding to improve police training and resources.

As head of the Nigerian Police Service Commission, one of Chief Simon Okeke's first tasks was to promote 17,000 officers who had not received a promotion throughout the fourteen years of military rule. His action quickly resolved the first-ever police strike in Nigeria. Since the commission doles out discipline and rewards, it is well positioned to raise morale among officers. While few oversight agencies have such dual powers, a concern with police morale could lead any oversight agency to record good police behavior, as well as misconduct, and to publicly acknowledge when complaints against officers turn out to be unfounded.

By accepting complaints against *all* public agencies, rather than singling out the police for special scrutiny, the Indian Human Rights Commissions (HRCs) implicitly recognize that the police are not alone in committing misconduct and also that the beliefs and actions of police officers should be understood as occurring within the broader context of social and political problems. Adnan Pandupraja, general secretary of the Indonesian NGO Police Watch, agrees. Under former President Soeharto, the Indonesian police were incorporated within the army, which is strongly suspected of having been involved in organized crime, drug trafficking, and corruption. While rigorous reform of the police is necessary, argues Pandupraja, apportioning blame is counterproductive. Instead, organizations like his must work with the police to solve the problems that lead to misconduct. Abdul Rachman, police chief of South Jakarta, described how officers are now required to work more independently than they were under Soeharto's rule and are

confused about what approach to take. Community policing projects developed by Police Watch in collaboration with law enforcement are helping to set a new direction for these officers.

Not only are police subject to political pressures, they also are influenced by broader public conceptions of appropriate police behavior. Commandante Musso José Veloso of the Military Police of Minas Gerais, Brazil, observes that officers in his state believe that the citizens they serve actually condone brutality. While police managers can create new procedures and training routines to improve the behavior of officers, Veloso believes that changing this perception—and whatever grounding it has in reality—demands more comprehensive education and reform.

V. Holding Civilian Oversight Accountable

Like police organizations, oversight mechanisms are also embedded in societies and subject to social and cultural norms. Pramod Kumar, director of the Institute for Development and Communication in Chandigarh, India, describes how the Human Rights Commissions in India frequently—whether intentionally or unintentionally—push aside complaints that involve gender-based offenses or that come from lower caste individuals. “No one,” observes Kumar, “is concerned about policing at the margins of society.” Similar trends were highlighted in the evaluation of the ombudsmen’s offices in Brazil. Surveys and focus groups with citizens from different socio-economic backgrounds showed that several of the ombudsmen’s offices had failed to adequately reach out to residents of poorer neighborhoods. Oversight agencies must also ensure that interested parties do not corrupt their own staff. The Independent Complaints Directorate in South Africa recently discovered the first case of a corrupt investigator, a discovery that led to his dismissal and criminal charges against him.

Beyond the more glaring concerns of corruption on the one hand and incompetence on the other, holding an oversight agency accountable ultimately depends on maintaining the active participation of citizens in the process of overseeing the police. Hans Landolt, from the *Instituto de Defensa Legal* (Legal Defense Institute) in Peru, observes that throughout the recent military regime, civilian oversight took the form of public denunciations of serious violations of human rights. With the change in government and the transition to democracy, the government has sought to institutionalize oversight by forming agreements with NGOs to monitor government agencies, including the national police, and by creating the police and people’s ombudsmen to receive complaints. The question for civil society now, Landolt emphasizes, is how to sustain the active participation of citizens so that these new institutions are held accountable and Peru’s fragile democracy grows stronger.

Conclusion

Civilian oversight is exercised through a variety of mechanisms ranging from specialized agencies, such as an ombudsman's office and a human rights commission to the informal activities of civil society. The mobilization of Russian citizens around the problem of drug trafficking by the police, for example, illustrates the way in which control over police conduct can be exerted through informal citizen activity. As Georgii Satarov observed, a formal oversight institution would currently be impractical in Russia, where citizens remain deeply cynical about the effectiveness of government committees. "The surest way to kill an idea," he continued, quoting a Russian saying, "is to create a committee." While more specialized and less diffuse forms of oversight may or may not develop in Russia, improving police behavior there—or anywhere else—doesn't depend on any one particular form of oversight. Instead, Satarov argued, at the core of civilian oversight are social norms that create pressure for respectful, effective policing and which are exercised through the active participation of citizens.

Throughout the discussion in Los Angeles, civilian oversight emerged not so much as a specific structure but as the product of changing relationships between government agencies, police departments, and civil society. It is an effort to protect the fundamental human rights of all citizens and to strengthen remedies when individuals charged with enforcing the law and advancing public safety violate those rights. In its most effective form, civilian oversight tries to achieve these goals through collaboration between citizens and the police. Civilian oversight can never substitute for good police leadership or displace internal methods of fostering a culture of accountability and responsibility. By exposing police practices, pointing out the shortcomings in how police regulate themselves, reporting honestly on the depth and pace of police reform, and engaging the public and the police in a dialogue, however, civilian oversight is a vital part of democratic policing. More broadly, civilian oversight could become an integral part of maintaining social order so that democratic political processes can be conducted freely and lawfully.

Appendix: Participants in the Global Meeting on Civilian Oversight of Police

Brazil

Claudio Beato, Director, Center for Crime and Public Safety Studies at the University of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte

Elizabeth Leeds, Program Officer, Ford Foundation, Rio de Janeiro

Julita Lemgruber, Director Center for Studies of Public Security and Citizenship, Rio de Janeiro

Reinaldo Martins, Comandante, Military Police of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte

Musso José Veloso, Comandante, Military Police of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte

Chile

Hugo Fruhling, Director, Center for Development Studies at the University of Chile, Santiago

Czech Republic

Pavel Bílek, Deputy Director, Czech Helsinki Committee, Prague

India

Anil P. Bhatnagar, Additional Director General of Police (Intelligence), Chandigarh

Pramod Kumar, Director, Institute for Development and Communication, Chandigarh

Sankar Sen, Senior Fellow, Institute of Social Sciences, New Delhi

Brij Pal Singh, Additional Director General, West Bengal Human Rights Commission, Calcutta

Indonesia

Adnan Pandupraja, General Secretary, Indonesian Police Watch, Jakarta

Abdul Rahman, Police Chief of South Jakarta

Kenya

Joseph Gitari, Program Officer, Ford Foundation, Nairobi

Peter Kimanthi, Assistant Commissioner of Police, Nairobi

Wambui Kimathi, Deputy Director, Kenya Human Rights Commission, Nairobi

Philip Kisia, Chairman, Nairobi Central Business District Association

Richard Lumbe, Consultant, Nairobi Central Business District Association

Nigeria

Innocent Chukwuma, Director, Center for Law Enforcement Education, Lagos
Chief Simon Okeke, Chairman, Police Service Commission, Abuja

Peru

General Enrique Yépez Dávalos, National Police, Lima
Hans Landolt, Institute for Legal Defense, Lima

Russia

Colonel Leonid Bogdanov, Head of the Department for Maintenance of Precincts and
Juvenile Squads, St. Petersburg
Boris Pustinstev, Executive Director, Citizens' Watch, St. Petersburg
Georgy Satarov, President, INDEM Foundation, Moscow

South Africa

David Bruce, Senior Researcher, Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation,
Johannesburg
Karen McKenzie, Executive Director, Independent Complaints Directorate, Pretoria
Tommy Tshabalala, Director of Investigations, Independent Complaints Directorate,
Pretoria

United States

Lee Baca, Los Angeles County Sheriff
Chitra Bhanu, Senior Program Associate, Vera Institute of Justice, New York
Merrick Bobb, Director, Police Assessment Resource Center, Los Angeles
Francis James, Director, International Programs, Vera Institute of Justice, New York
Joel Miller, Senior Research Associate, Vera Institute of Justice, New York
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Emma Phillips, Program Analyst, Vera Institute of Justice, New York
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