

# FORUM THEATRE

**Time:** Minimum 45 minutes

**Goal or purpose of the exercise:** To explore different scenarios and options; to develop new alternatives.

## **How it's done/facilitator's notes**

Forum Theatre is a form of role playing that can be used for public action (see 'Turkey: Building a Nonviolent Culture', p104). The basic idea is to act out a scenario, perhaps leading to an undesirable conclusion or violence and then to begin acting out the scenario again. This time, however, either a participant in the role play or any observer can shout 'freeze' and take over a role in the scenario to try to do something differently.

## ***A short example of forum theatre***

**Plot:** Two members of your group visit a state official to report an act of violence against your group. It is unclear whether the police and whoever attacked your group collaborated. Before entering the official's office, ask the group members to decide what documentation about the attack they have as well as what they want to achieve. Ask the person playing the official to take a certain attitude (ranging from generally sympathetic to feigning that s/he will take it seriously to downright hostility and counter-attacking) and motive (such as a desire to keep group quiet or to find out as much about them as possible). Ask the official to begin the meeting with something somewhat disruptive, such as taking the initiative him/herself (or at least telling them how busy s/he is and perhaps asking to see their identity cards). S/he should also consider doing something friendly or scary (friendly would be reminiscing about his or her activist youth or claiming friendship with parents of some group members; frightening would be showing knowledge of private lives of group members).

**Cast:** 2-4 group members, 1 official, 1 official's receptionist

**Role play:** Play out the scenario once through. When the group replays, ask the official to introduce new challenges for the group. Remind people that if they have a new idea to try, call out 'freeze' and take the place of one of the group members.

**Discussion points:** What were reasonable objectives for the group members? How could they take the initiative in the situation? How much did they want to divulge about the group and its members? Were they putting other group members or their families at risk? If they convinced the official to promise to do something, how could they firm that into an agreement and make sure it happens? How could they have prepared better for this visit?