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PBI-USA

Peace Brigades International - USA

Around the world, human rights defenders continue to stand as beacons of hope and resilience to all who are working towards a better world where human rights are upheld, respected, and enforced. These brave individuals and groups are at the forefront of the fight for justice, environmental protection, Indigenous rights, gender equality, and more. They work tirelessly, often at great personal risk, to promote and protect the rights of marginalized and vulnerable communities. Those risks are graver than ever: every single day a human rights defender is murdered somewhere in the world, according to Front Line Defenders.

Over the past year, PBI has provided protection to 1,874 individuals, 53 organizations and 822 communities worldwide. We have increased our presence in some of the world's most violent territories, implementing sophisticated strategies to dissuade State and non-State armed actors from attacking community leaders.

In November 2023, PBI held a visionary workshop to discuss and evaluate our own work. PBI contracted with external evaluators to review PBI's structure with a particular emphasis on our country group structure. Discussion continues regarding the ability of country groups to adopt in-country activities, a strategy that currently conflicts with our mandate. PBI-USA will soon share details of a National Gathering being planned for 2024 where we will explore the future direction of the U.S. country group together. We hope you'll join us!

PBI-USA continues to provide advocacy support and raise awareness about the work of defenders and the threats they face. The impact of the defenders we supported reached over 200,000 people globally.

We all have a role to play in building peace. At PBI, we are determined to support, protect and empower human rights defenders, and to make sure world leaders do so as well. We've made progress - with your help - we'll make more.

PBI was founded in 1981 with the mandate to create space for peace and protect human rights. PBI has a horizontal, international structure with an international coordinating office in Brussels, international committees and working groups, eight field projects, and a dozen country groups, including PBI-USA. The work of PBI-USA is made possible through the efforts of a small staff and group of volunteers, including PBI-USA's Board of Directors (the National Coordinating Committee or NCC).

Staff:
Amelia Parker Finance Director
National Coordinating Committee (NCC):
Camille Coleman New York, NY
Faith Garlington San Francisco, CA

Pat Davis Advocacy Director
Andrew Miller Washington, DC
Katherine Bissell-Cordova Chicago, IL

PBI-USA is a 501c3 nonprofit organization registered in the state of Washington. Our EIN number is 91-1702845. We file an annual 990 tax return with the IRS and a corporate annual report with the state of Washington. To read our full financial records, visit PBIUSA.org/finances.

If you would like to make a tax-deductible contribution to support the work of PBI:

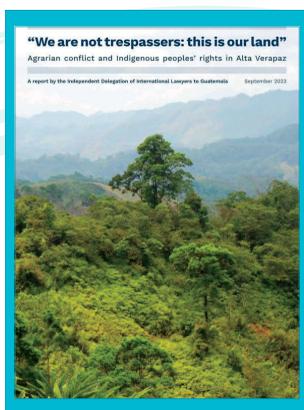
- ➡ Return the included envelope with a check or credit card information to PBI-USA, P.O. Box 75880, Washington, DC 20013; or
- ➡ Go to PBIUSA.org and click on "Donate to PBI-USA" to donate online; or
- ➡ Call us and make a credit or debit card donation by phone (202-232-0142).

Do you have a few hours per month to dedicate to international peace and solidarity?



We are accepting applications for our board of directors - The National Coordinating Committee or NCC

To express your interest in joining the NCC, send us an email or give us a call at info@pbiousa.org or 202-232-0142.



A new report by a high-level fact-finding mission of international human rights lawyers has called on the Guatemalan state to stand up to vested interests and tackle the systematic failures fueling violence against Indigenous peoples.

“We are not trespassers: this is our land” - Agrarian conflict and Indigenous peoples’ rights in Alta Verapaz calls on both Guatemala and the international community to prioritize Indigenous rights to ancestral land, and to work to end the criminalization and evictions characterizing the country’s agrarian conflict.

Responding to requests from Indigenous leaders concerned about threats to the rule of law and the rights of rural communities, PBI supported a delegation of lawyers who travelled to Alta Verapaz in Guatemala in March 2023 to meet Indigenous communities, civil society organizations, government officials, diplomats, law enforcement representatives, and the private sector, to understand the structural causes of rural violence.

The lawyers observed widespread criminalization arising from complaints from private landowners against communities. They expressed concern at the lack of legal certainty regarding how Indigenous people can defend their territorial rights and defend them within a fragmented system of land ownership.

Their report also calls on the international community and multinational entities operating in or linked to Guatemala to respect Indigenous rights, advocating for strong supply-chain laws to prevent companies profiting from human rights abuses abroad.

Daniel Cerqueira, the Director of the Human Rights and Natural Resources Program at the Due Process of Law Foundation (DPLF), said “The international community and businesses with investment in Guatemala must respect rights despite weaknesses in the domestic legal framework, and should speak out about the criminalization of Indigenous communities defending their right to live on their ancestral land.”

As follow-up to the visit, DPLF and PBI-USA jointly organized an advocacy tour to Washington, DC in October 2023 to raise awareness about the threats to democracy and human rights abuses against Indigenous communities in Guatemala. Our delegation (pictured below) uplifted important voices such as:

Jorge Luis Morales Cifuentes, a lawyer who since 1984 has represented and handled the legal and land regularization processes of the Verapaz Union of Campesino Organizations (UVOC), accompanied by PBI. UVOC is an Indigenous and campesino organization dedicated to the defense and promotion of access to land for more than 50,000 families belonging to Indigenous communities in the region.

Carmela Curup, a former staff member with the Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights and current Director of the Indigenous Peoples' Law Firm.

Juan Castro, a lawyer with the Indigenous Peoples' Law Firm.

Esteban Toc, the Deputy Mayor of the Indigenous Municipality of Solola who has been a spokesperson in the recent peaceful demonstrations demanding respect for the Guatemalan election results.



Our Values

We are BOLD - we think outside of the box and act creatively.

We are BRAVE - we stand alongside at-risk defenders and we aren't afraid to speak out in the face of injustice.

We are INCLUSIVE - we believe that anyone, anywhere, can defend human rights and should be able to do so safely.

We are INTERSECTIONAL - we consider the impact of our work on justice and equality in regard to gender, race, LGBTIQ+identities, disability and other protected characteristics.

We are COLLABORATIVE - we know we can't do it alone, so we partner with like-minded individuals and organizations, working to one another's strengths.

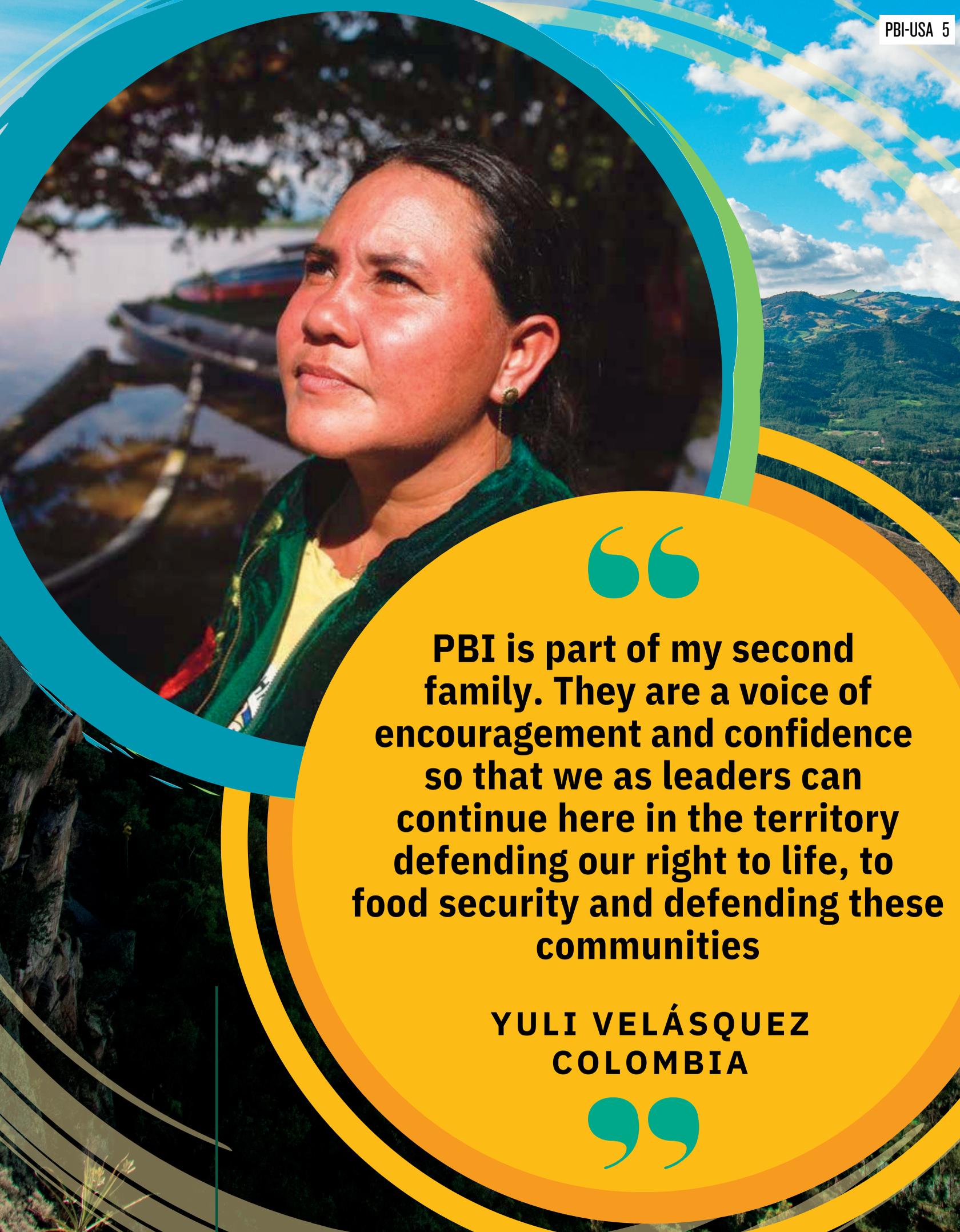
We are EFFICIENT - we prioritize key leverage points for the biggest impact possible.

We are HRD-LED - our field projects and our direct contact with defenders on the ground allow us to respond to their needs with the right actions at the right time.

We are TRANSPARENT and accountable - to our donors, our supporters, and to the human rights defenders we work with.

PBI works with defenders in some of the world's riskiest countries, and currently has field projects in:





“

PBI is part of my second family. They are a voice of encouragement and confidence so that we as leaders can continue here in the territory defending our right to life, to food security and defending these communities

**YULI VELÁSQUEZ
COLOMBIA**

”

PBI Field

Updates

Honduras 2013-NOW



Many indigenous communities in Alta Verapaz live with the permanent worry of being evicted. Raising their voices to denounce these situations and to defend their land rights is a risky activity that exposes them to threats and aggression from State and private actors. In August 2014 people from various communities blocked a road in Samococh (Chisec) to protest against the imminent eviction to take place in Monte Olivo. The National Civil Police (PNC) responded by mobilizing over 1,000 policemen, resulting in more than 20 PNC officers being accused of extrajudicial execution, non-compliance with duties and abuse of authority for causing the death of three Q'eqchi' community members from Samococh village during the protest. Hearings in this case, which continue in 2023, began in January 2017. 19 low-ranking police officers have been indicted for abuse of authority, breach of duty, releasing their weapons, and extrajudicial execution.

Guatemala 1983-1999, 2003-NOW

In an interview with Madrid-based newspaper El Diario, EHRD Reynaldo Dominguez (pictured right), a member of the Guapinol River resistance, discusses how his activism has led to prison, threats and the murder of a family member, but he does not give up - he says, "I'm more afraid that we



will all die of thirst, because it's no longer about eliminating one person, but the whole community. That is why, he says, he continues to fight for his dream: "To leave the communities free of extractivist projects." PBI has bolstered the numbers on our team in 2023 through emergency recruitment. We're also working to get human and financial resources to our team, while planning and carrying out advocacy activities in DC with visiting defenders. Read the full interview at pbiousa.org.

Colombia 1994-NOW

The 2016 signing of the Peace Agreement brought hope of peace and a dignified life for communities throughout Colombia. However, the lack of its comprehensive implementation has obstructed addressing the armed conflict's structural causes and has left communities at the mercy of intensifying violence. PBI continues to accompany the brave human rights defenders who continue on a long and exhausting path, persevering for that long-sought peace.



Nicaragua 1983, 2020-NOW

On January 9, 2023, PBI accompanied (pictured above) the organizations of Nicaraguan human rights defenders exiled in Costa Rica who celebrated the release in Nicaragua of 222 political prisoners. It was a day for the Nicaraguans living in exile in Costa Rica to reunite and reaffirm their commitment to continue fighting against impunity, for truth, justice, reparations and for the total restoration of human rights in Nicaragua. The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights has stated that 23% of the thousands of Nicaraguans in exile are human rights defenders, 20% are students who took part in protests, while others include former soldiers, police, journalists and doctors.



"I am very grateful for PBI's work, even more so now that PBI is practically the only international organization that continues to be present in our territories."

CARLOS MORALES GUATEMALA

Indonesia 2000-2011, 2014-NOW

Working with two West Papuan organizations and a national expert group, PBI and ELSAM have conducted two initial trainings with local community members to discuss the nature of violence, identify their existing conflict resolution mechanisms, and talk about the standard components of early warning systems. This is done with the intention of empowering the community to establish their own early warning mechanism. PBI began a partnership with the Institute for Policy Research and Advocacy (ELSAM) in 2014 to support EHRDs via capacity building trainings and network strengthening activities.



Kenya 2013-NOW

PBI is paying close attention to the ongoing human rights situation from the capital of the country to the coast. Work to grow the Women Human Rights Defenders Toolkit Organizers' Network continues with defenders focused on speaking out against gender-based violence. Since the pandemic, organizers have created murals such as the mural pictured above with communities in multiple settlements to prevent sexual and gender-based violence. Despite continued threats against defenders in Kenya the community working to uphold human rights for all is staying strong. Learn more at pbi-kenya.org.

Nepal 2006-2013, 2014-NOW

Nepal's civil war resulted in thousands of cases of human rights violations including torture, killings, sexual violence and forced disappearances, with both sides having been accused of serious human rights abuses. Many of the perpetrators are still in high positions in the government and military, and not a single perpetrator has been brought to justice for their crime. PBI accompanies human rights defenders such as Dr. Mandira Sharma who fight for transitional justice in the country. The Comprehensive Peace Agreement that ended the war included a commitment to set up a truth and reconciliation commission to investigate human rights violations and crimes against humanity. However, efforts have been blocked by each succeeding government since the agreement was signed.



Mexico 1994, 1999-NOW

In June 2023, Mexican environmental defender Alejandro Torres Xocolatl was detained, presumably as a reprisal for his sustained campaigning for Indigenous rights in the face of large-scale business and infrastructure projects. PBI carried out a global activation of political and civil society contacts, while simultaneously providing on-the-ground international observation at his judicial hearings (pictured above). At the end of July 2023, Alejandro's arrest warrant was withdrawn. While PBI works to provide a protective presence in areas of Mexico where rural defenders face grave threats, our offices globally continue to mobilize international support for defenders and their causes. Learn more at pbi-mexico.org.

PBI works with human rights defenders in some of the most high-risk countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia, and advocates for all defenders to be protected and supported effectively. However, some of our programs focus on groups whose activism contributes exponentially to global rights and justice, and who face specific and heightened risks:



Land, environmental and Indigenous defenders are on the front lines in the fight for our planet's future. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change recognizes that the voices of Indigenous communities and environmentalists already suffering the consequences of climate change must be heard if we're to stem the crisis of global warming. Yet many live in fear of speaking out. More than four land and environmental defenders are murdered every week, with Indigenous defenders over-represented. Rural communities often lack the information and resources to tackle business interests affecting their rights.



Honduras

Mexico

Indonesia

Honduras: High alert as defenders in Honduras face grave reprisals

Violent reprisals in rural Honduras continue unabated. In 2023 environmental defenders Jairo Bonilla and Aly Domínguez - plus Aly's brother Oquelí - were murdered, in the latest violence against opponents of the Los Pinares mine which has now been belatedly suspended by the Honduran government. The Guapinol water defenders demand a permanent cancellation due to alleged violations of the community's rights and contamination of their water supply. The situation in Honduras is of extreme concern. It is not only rural environmentalists who face a backlash in Honduras. Recently, PBI joined Front Line Defenders to publicly express concern for the lack of protection for defenders of LGTBI+ rights. Read more on pages 10 & 11.

Mexico: Combatting the criminalization of grassroots leaders who protect our planet

The grassroots organization, the United Peoples Front in Defense of Land and Water of the Cholulteca Region (FPDTA-MPT), has successfully challenged and stalled a series of apparently corrupt and polluting extractive projects on Indigenous lands including thermoelectric plants, water bottling facilities, and a gas pipeline. As a consequence, the criminalization of Alejandro Torres Xocolatl, one of the group's leaders, intensified in June 2023 when he was detained.



PBI carried out a global mobilization of political and civil society contacts, while simultaneously providing on-the-ground observation at his judicial hearings. Alejandro's arrest warrant was withdrawn and he is now back on the front lines. Pictured, second from the left, Alejandro and PBI team members following Alejandro's release.

Indonesia: Holistic security training for defenders supporting communities displaced by land grabbing and armed conflict

In 2022, PBI trained 271 Indonesian defenders and supported one key member of the country's youth movement to complete a 10-week international course on peace and conflict work. Our training helped strengthen cooperation between her movement and the rural communities displaced by land grabbing and armed conflict. She also took part in a delegation to Jakarta to raise awareness of the humanitarian emergency and brief the diplomatic community, which subsequently raised concerns with the Indonesian authorities. National media covered the issue too, resulting in improvements in the humanitarian assistance given to the displaced communities.



Defenders working for peace, justice and the rule of law help build, protect and strengthen the institutions that allow democracy to flourish and safeguard human rights. Whether working on emblematic cases of injustice or advocating for systemic change, these activists are on a collision course with vested interests benefiting from the status quo. Sophisticated protection strategies and specific tools can allow these defenders to catalyze effective transitions to peace and the development of laws and mechanisms that give effect to international human rights obligations.



Colombia

Colombia: Fighting enforced disappearance and working to end impunity

In March 2023, we welcomed the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation to Washington, DC on an advocacy visit to address the serious situation of impunity for forced disappearance in Colombia and to request: 1) the declassification of intelligence files so the Foundation can access information on the whereabouts of the disappeared, 2) support for the law on women seekers, and 3) support for their protection. PBI-Colombia has accompanied the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation occasionally from 2007 and in full since 2016.



Kenya

Kenya: Supporting the drive to decrease police violence

The Missing Voices coalition uses data-driven advocacy campaigns to prevent extrajudicial executions and enforced disappearances, contributing to a 30% reduction in police killings and a 38% reduction in disappearances in Kenya. Missing Voices advocacy contributed to commitments by newly-elected President Ruto to establish a Special Tribunal for Gross Human Rights Violations and Enforced Disappearances, and to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances. However, coalition members have requested PBI's support due to ongoing risks. In 2022, PBI supported a training organized by Missing Voices and helped facilitate contacts and spaces within the international community to strengthen their influence and build campaign momentum.



Nepal

Nepal: Fighting for transitional justice and the need for international solidarity

Dr. Mandira Sharma is a prominent lawyer, activist, and co-founder of Advocacy Forum - one of Nepal's leading organizations of human rights lawyers. For over 20 years, she has been a leading voice in the transitional justice movement and represented victims of human rights violations in Nepal. During Nepal's 1996-2006 civil war, more than 17,000 people were killed, thousands were forcibly disappeared, and hundreds of thousands were displaced. The country is at a critical juncture in the struggle for transitional justice.

Despite the challenges they face, Mandira and her colleagues continue to seek justice for victims of human rights violations in Nepal. PBI continues to stand with Mandira as she campaigns for justice in her home country. In an interview in December 2022 during a PBI speaking tour, Mandira called on the international community to not lose sight of the opportunities and challenges in Nepal. Read the full interview at pbiusa.org.

“The international community largely thinks that Nepal is now relatively peaceful, but we have not been able to address legacies of the past. This could lead to another violent conflict and this is something we want to prevent. We have a lot of opportunities if Nepal receives international support ... There is a lot happening around the world at the moment but you cannot lose sight of issues in other countries like Nepal.”

Dr. Mandira Sharma





Defenders of women's rights, LGBTQIA+ rights, and gender equality work to end the discrimination underpinning problems which disproportionately affect women and the LGBTQIA+ community, such as sexual and gender-based violence and inadequate healthcare. Many working on these issues are women human rights defenders who face distinct challenges, including threats from within their own communities, meaning they require specific and tailored support.



Guatemala

Guatemala: Working at the intersection of indigenous women's rights and land rights

In a recent interview, PBI explores various crucial topics, from the intersection of Indigenous women's rights and the criminalization of WHRDs to the impact of multinational organizations and the recent contested presidential vote, with Lesbia Artola, Comité Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA).

“Being a woman is challenging because our struggles as women start within our own homes, within our own communities, and in all those places in which we might be present as women. There's no recognition at all of the fact that WHRDs are in the vanguard, but also at the frontline of oppression and that we're being criminalized as part of this oppression. Before, women weren't really criminalized very much - or we weren't aware of the criminalization - but we've always been involved in the struggle against both oppression and machismo. Currently, with the situation in Guatemala, it is women who are at the front of the demonstrations and women leaders are demonstrating their power and strength.” Lesbia Artola, CCDA (pictured right)



In addition to being on the frontlines, women are also over represented among those suffering human rights abuses. Guatemala has 138 families who are now in temporary refuge, having been forced off their land. Of those 138 families, most of those people are women. This affects them psychologically, but they continue to keep fighting to take care of their children and families. Read the full interview at PBIUSA.org.

Honduras: Acts of violence target LGBTQIA+ activists and community members

Public acts of homo-, trans- and bi-phobia have intensified since the military coup of 2009, with 442 violent deaths recorded by the Cattrachas Lesbian Network since then. PBI provides protective accompaniment and security training to LGBTQIA+ rights organizations, as well as observing marches, providing communications platforms for the movement's demands, and mobilizing international advocacy support. In May 2022 - following tireless campaigning by local organizations and an emblematic ruling by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights - the Honduran government made a historic apology and recognized its responsibility for the 2009 transfeminicide of human rights defender Vicky Hernández. PBI supports the calls for full implementation of the reparations and guarantees of non-repetition ordered by the Court.



Honduras



Nicaragua

Nicaragua: Supporting women human rights defenders in exile

Since 2020, PBI's team in Costa Rica has supported exiled Nicaraguan human rights defenders, providing training on security, advocacy and well-being to women leaders. In 2022, the number of displaced Nicaraguans in Costa Rica doubled in one year's time. According to the UNHCR, more than 164,500 Nicaraguans were apprehended by the US Border Patrol in 2022, a 224% increase from the 50,000 who attempted to cross in 2021. PBI remains concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in the country.

Photo: Former Sandinista revolutionary Dora Maria Tellez, who was sentenced in February 2022 to 8 years in prison, was released on February 9, 2023 and exiled to Re the U.S





At the end of July 2023, PBI accompanied the organizations Asociación LGTB Arcoiris de Honduras and the Center for LGTBI Development and Cooperation (SOMOS CDC) during the closing Pride march (pictured above) through the streets of Tegucigalpa where a violent incident targeting attendees resulted in the injury of a prominent trans activist.. As reported by Honduran news outlet Reportar sin Miedo, “attendees watched as a silver Honda sped over the wet street and raised a curtain of rainwater. They kept screaming when the car knocked Megan Kerr down.” According to Megan, the car hit her knee and hip and was inches away from breaking her legs. PBI responded:

We stand in solidarity with transgender defender Megan Kerr of the Honduran LGTB Rainbow Association after the outrage that occurred during the Pride March in Tegucigalpa. We recognize the important work that Megan does in favor of LGTBI+ rights in the country. We are concerned about the hate speech and transphobia that prevail in Honduran society and that constitute a risk for people from the LGTBI+ collective. We remember that the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, through the sentence of Vicky Hernández and others vs. State of Honduras, made several recommendations to guarantee the rights of trans people in Honduras, some of which are still pending.



At PBI we highlight the work of all the organizations that work to defend LGTBI+ rights and we remember the importance of protecting the people of the collective, who every day suffer situations of violence and oppression. We also remind the international community of the recommendations of the Inter-American Court. Honduras has not only been found to be complicit in the violence the LGBTQI+ community is experiencing, recently Honduran state agents were found culpable. In June 2021, the government of Honduras was found responsible for the 2009 murder of trans woman and activist Vicky Hernández, who was killed on the first night of the June 2009 coup d'état, in which the Honduran military ousted President Manuel Zelaya. The court ruling found ‘several indications of the participation of state agents. The court ordered Honduras, which has the world’s highest rate of murders of trans people, to pay reparations to Hernández’s family and implement a sweeping range of measures designed to protect trans people, including anti-discrimination training for security forces and state collection of data on violence against LGBTQ+ people. The IACHR also ruled that the state must allow people to alter their gender identity on identification documents and public records. Honduras has yet to comply with all orders.

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SUPPORT PBI TODAY!

With PBI's support, human rights defenders continue to have a huge impact.

In Guatemala, Indigenous leaders accompanied by PBI won a landmark court case to prohibit destructive mining projects on their land. In Kenya, grassroots activists we protect in Nairobi's urban settlements have worked to decrease the number of extrajudicial killings by the police. In Colombia, the organizations we support gained key provisions on rights and justice in the country's peace accords after half a century of civil war. For 40 years, PBI volunteers have accompanied human rights defenders in their darkest hours and their greatest triumphs, but that would not have been possible without you.

Your support is a critical part of our work to protect threatened human rights defenders and help create space for peace.



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making space for peace

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