



# PEACE IN ACTION

a publication of Peace Brigades International - USA (PBI-USA)

[WWW.PBIUSA.ORG](http://WWW.PBIUSA.ORG)

WINTER 2024



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Cover photo: U.S. Advocacy Director, Pat Davis, human rights defender Jani Silva from the Colombian Amazon, and PBI Colombia staffer Daniel Otero on an advocacy tour in Washington, D.C. April 2024.





## PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL USA

PBI was founded in 1981 with the mandate to create space for peace and protect human rights. PBI has a horizontal structure with an international coordinating office in Brussels, international working groups and committees, 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).

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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/finance](http://PBIUSA.org/finance).

### IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A TAX-DEDUCTIBLE CONTRIBUTION TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF PBI:

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





# MAKING SPACE FOR PEACE

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL USA

## U.S. UPDATES

### Greetings from PBI USA!

As we approach the close of 2024, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has supported PBI in our mission to protect human rights defenders around the world. This past year has been challenging yet inspiring as human rights defenders continue to show resilience and courage in the face of ever increasing threats.

### REFLECTING ON 2024 ACHIEVEMENTS AND THE PBI GENERAL ASSEMBLY

2024 was a year of renewal for PBI. Seeking to engage in the most effective messaging and strategy, we dedicated time in 2024 to adopt a new logo and visual identity as well as to launch new initiatives aimed at enhancing security training and digital protection for threatened human rights defenders. Our on-the-ground support allows us to continue supporting the development of grassroots networks that provide critical support to dissuade attacks and other acts of violence. At the 2024 PBI General Assembly in Lisbon, we approved proposals to explore expanding PBI into new areas with no added cost or risk to the global organization and adopted a new strategic plan to guide our collective work in the years to come, including an added focus of advocating for corporate actors to uphold human rights.

### LOOKING AHEAD TO 2025

Our focus in 2025 remains on strengthening the U.S. country group and growing our base of support so we remain able to support the always-in-demand protection work of our teams around the world. 2025 will undoubtedly be challenging for human rights defenders. If you are able, please consider committing to a monthly donation to PBI-USA or increasing the amount of your yearly gift. Monthly donors are truly the lifeblood of our organization, allowing us to better plan for what's ahead, including our upcoming National Gathering.

We look forward to hosting PBI supporters from around the country on Memorial Day Weekend 2025 (May 23-25) in Washington, D.C., for our first National Gathering in over a decade. Not able to make it? Please consider making a donation to help cover the costs of this gathering which is free and open to all PBI supporters and allies. Visit [PBIUSA.org](https://PBIUSA.org) to learn more, register, and to start your monthly donation!

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!

None of this would be possible without the unwavering support of our donors, volunteers, and partners. Your contribution makes a tangible difference in the lives of human rights defenders worldwide.

*Wishing you a peaceful and prosperous New Year!*

With gratitude,  
The PBI USA Team







# MAKING SPACE FOR PEACE

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL USA

## U.S. ADVOCACY

### SHEDDING LIGHT ON THE RESISTANCE TO LARGE-SCALE SAND MINING IN GUATEMALA

Since 1989, the Chinautla Multisector Urban Platform have defended their right to be consulted on the activities of various clay extraction companies operating in their territory and defending their territory against the pollution caused by other businesses operating in the region. Upon request, PBI-Guatemala began accompanying the community in December 2018 as they have been subject to attacks and criminalization for their peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

According to PBI's team in Guatemala, the region has been a sand mining area for decades; however, during the administration of mayor Arnoldo Medrano (between 1988 and 2015), the industrial extraction process was authorized with large scale machinery without consulting the communities.

"Large-scale sand mining, the dumping of construction materials, garbage, and earth by the mining companies, and pollution from a garbage dump upstream have made the Chinautla river one of the most polluted rivers in Guatemala," states Pat Davis, U.S. Advocacy Director (pictured left). "The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, at PBI's request, visited the community last summer and found 'a serious contamination problem with profound impacts on biodiversity, environment and the human rights of the communities that depend on it for subsistence, including the Mayan Poqomam people.'"

More than 2,000 people are being affected in different ways. The use of heavy machinery has led to ruptures in the walls of residents' homes. The dust kicked up by vehicles has led to residents suffering from respiratory problems. The mining activities are also negatively impacting the local economy of these communities

As a result of the sand mining, clay traditionally used by residents to make figurines has decreased in quality. Clay handicrafts are the main economic activity of these communities.

Although the mining licenses of the sand extraction companies expired in 2022, mining operations continue. Photo (right) taken by U.S. Advocacy Director Pat Davis on a recent visit to the community.







**“ I FIRST BECAME ENGAGED IN PBI-USA WHEN THE OFFICE WAS BASED IN OAKLAND. AFTER A LONG HIATUS, I AM EXCITED THAT THROUGH THE NCC, I AM ONCE AGAIN ABLE TO DIRECTLY SUPPORT THE PROTECTION OF THREATENED HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS AROUND THE WORLD. ”**

**BILL EISENSTEIN**

2024 NCC RECRUIT

**VISIT [PBIUSA.ORG](https://pbiusa.org) AND CLICK ON “GET INVOLVED” TO LEARN ABOUT THE U.S. BOARD OF DIRECTORS, THE ROLE OF AN NCC MEMBER, AND TO JOIN THE TEAM!**

# PBI FIELD UPDATES



## GUATEMALA

1983-1999, 2003-NOW

The concentration of land ownership combined with a lack of acknowledgment of ancestral land rights is an ongoing problem facing the Indigenous people in Guatemala. The Indigenous Community of San Francisco Quezaltepeque continues to face significant threats such as land dispossession, criminalization, and socio-political violence. These challenges stem from increased extractive industries and infrastructure projects that encroach on their ancestral lands, undermining their traditional way of life and cultural heritage. The community is often subject to intimidation and violence, with local leaders and activists facing harassment and threats to their safety. In this context, PBI provides support by providing protective accompaniment to community members and leaders. Pictured above, PBI-Guatemala accompanies the Indigenous Community on April 6, 2024 as it protects Cerro del Quetzal ancestral lands, which is mostly virgin forest that is highly desirable to private interests. The Indigenous Community is also resisting a mining company (Minerales Sierra Pacifico S.A) working in the municipality that has five exploration licenses for gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc.

## HONDURAS 2013-NOW

In 2024, environmental defenders in Honduras continue to face significant challenges, marked by an ongoing struggle against powerful interests that threaten their lands and communities. These defenders often find themselves vulnerable to violence, intimidation, and criminalization as they oppose large-scale projects like hydroelectric dams and mining operations that disrupt ecosystems and local livelihoods. The Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH), a prominent Indigenous rights and environmental advocacy group, has been at the forefront of this struggle. Founded by the late Berta Cáceres, COPINH continues to champion the rights of the Lenca people, advocating for Indigenous rights, sustainable development, and environmental justice.

After a week of mobilizations in July 2024, COPINH reached an important agreement with the National Agrarian Institute for more than 500 Indigenous Lenca belonging to 12 communities in southwest Honduras through which the State committed to the community titling of more than 9,000 plots of land on which more than 900 Lenca families live. COPINH has committed to monitoring the fulfillment of the agreements, ensuring they are respected and implemented in a fair and prompt manner. But the work is not without risks. In September 2024, Guapinol river defender Juan Lopez was killed while leaving church. The bold work of COPINH in 2024 underscores the importance of PBI's support, as they persist in their efforts against formidable odds. Pictured below, PBI accompanies COPINH during the July mobilizations that led to the promised restoration of community land titles.







## KENYA

2013-NOW

At the beginning of October 2024, PBI Kenya accompanied a group of land and environmental activists (pictured above) from Kilifi County as they marched to the Governor's office to present a petition calling for the urgent intervention on the part of the President of Kenya through the Governor of Kilifi to stop the development of a nuclear power plant in Uyombo Village.

The activists are protesting the selection of the small fishing village of Uyombo as the preferred site for a nuclear power plant, citing the area's UNESCO biosphere and critical environmental sites, including the Mida Creek Mangrove Forest. They argue that this decision poses serious economic, environmental, and moral risks for the region. The nuclear power plant would be Kenya's first and is projected to start construction between 2027 and 2029 and begin operations in 2034.

PBI's support of the activists began over the summer after a peaceful protest on May 21, 2024 in Uyombo was met with intimidation, excessive violence, beatings, and arrests. PBI-Kenya met with survivors of the police violence not long after and since has worked to uplift their work and deter the threats faced by environmental activists and other activists facing police violence (police reform activists, tax reform activists, etc.) in Kenya. PBI now supports and protects environmental activists across Africa, Asia, and Latin America. To defend the planet, we must defend the defenders!

## NICARAGUA

1983, 2020-NOW



*Political refugees lead march in Costa Rica on International Women's Day. Photo: Katherine Estrada/Confidencial*

On March 8, 2024, PBI Nicaragua accompanied exiled Nicaraguan defenders while they marched in Costa Rica chanting the slogans "We march here - I can't in my country." Activists held signs with the faces of nineteen female political and student activists, feminists, and human rights advocates that are still being held as political prisoners in Nicaragua. Feminist defender Cris of the organization Las Malcriadas shared with PBI what it meant for the organizers of the march to ask political refugees to lead the march: "It means that the struggle of all of us in exile, and those in Nicaragua, is bearing fruit. It means resilience and hope and it means we're going to be able to come back."





Gita Rasaili (pictured above), Vice Chairperson of the Conflict Victim Women National Network (CVWN) and a representative of Nepal's marginalized Dalit community, shared her story with PBI in 2024 during a speaking tour to promote the release of a PBI report (pictured below) about Nepal's transitional justice process, which was amended in August 2024.

In the report, the lawyers warned the changes to the transitional justice process in Nepal could exclude "swathes of victims" from justice. They added that the new law "permits amnesties which would prevent criminal accountability for gross violations of human rights." Read the full report at [pbiousa.org](http://pbiousa.org).

Pictured above on the right, PBI-accompanied human rights defenders Mandira Sharma and Gita Rasaili went to Nepal's Parliament on October 22, 2024 alongside the Independent Delegation of International Lawyers to Nepal to speak about transitional justice and the rule of law. Both have long been strong advocates for transitional justice in Nepal.

Gita Rasaili shared a powerful testimony of the grave human rights violations against her family during the ten-year conflict in Nepal. "Victims must be at the heart of transitional justice," Gita urged.

Gita was born and raised in Nepal. During the ten-year conflict, her family was torn apart. Her brother, Arpan Rasaili, was killed in an encounter with state officials. Two years later, members of the Royal Nepalese Army stormed her house at midnight and brutally raped and killed her sister, Rina Rasaili, in front of the entire family. Gita and her family continue to seek justice for the crimes committed by the government of Nepal. Read more of Gita's story in her own words on the [pbiousa.org](http://pbiousa.org) website.

## Peace without Justice and Accountability?

A caution against impunity in post-conflict Nepal

Report by an Independent Delegation of International Lawyers to Nepal  
October 2024

At Parliament, Mandira Sharma (pictured right) cautioned that while civil society documented thousands of cases during Nepal's conflict, not one of them has been brought to justice.

"A failure to prosecute those responsible for human rights violations weakens the judiciary," shared Mandira. "As victims, we not only need reparations, but we also need justice and we need the truth."







## MEXICO 1994, 1999-NOW

Since early 2020, PBI has supported the FPDTA-MPT (Peoples' Front in Defense of Land & Water - Morelos, Puebla, and Tlaxcala) in their struggle to protect their communities from harmful industrial activities. Among the activities causing concern is the San Pedro intermunicipal landfill. There is evidence that the landfill contaminates the region yet nothing has been done to remedy the situation by authorities. Residents claim that the aquifers and crops in the area are being severely contaminated by the landfill.

"Since 2001 we have maintained an intense mobilization to contain the impacts of the thermoelectric plants, wind farms, gas pipelines, high-voltage power lines, highways, landfills, railways, and industrial parks. Large American, Canadian, Italian, Danish, French, Portuguese, Spanish, Chinese, and Taiwanese corporations are directly involved in these projects," the Peoples' Front and other organizations released in a statement in October 2024, endorsing a call to build an alliance against gas pipelines and other megaprojects in defense of Indigenous territories. Pictured below, PBI accompanies the National Meeting of Struggles against Gas Pipelines and Death Projects in January 2022.

PBI recognizes the fundamental role of communities in the non-violent resolution of conflicts and expresses our concern for potential environmental and health impacts that could result from this landfill, and we call for spaces for dialogue to be created, in good faith, for the communities and institutions of Puebla to resolve this conflict.



## COLOMBIA 1994-NOW

In July 2024, PBI Colombia accompanied the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation for Human Rights on a verification mission to the San Marcelino Indigenous Reservation in Putumayo following the incursion of the Ecuadorian army into the reserve in 2023.

On July 29, 2023, members of the Ecuadorian army entered the reserve in Colombia and reportedly detained the governor of the reservation, his spouse, and four other members of the Indigenous guard.

The Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation denounced the incursion and called for support from Colombian and international authorities to protect the Indigenous community from arbitrary detentions, violations of human rights, and violations of the rights of the Kichwa people and their authorities.

Prior to the incursion, PBI accompanied the Foundation to Washington, D.C. in March 2023 (pictured above) to expose the ongoing impunity for forced disappearances in Colombia, request the declassification of intelligence files with info on the whereabouts of the disappeared, and build support for the law to protect the women who have dedicated their lives to searching for their missing loved ones.

## INDONESIA 2000-2011, 2014-NOW

From military incursions in the Amazon to the taking of Indigenous land in Honduras for corporate greed, around the world human rights and the environment are suffering at the hands of business and state actors.

The Grasberg Mine project, located in West Papua in Indonesia, began a month after a military coup in 1965. It has one of the largest reserves of gold and copper in the world and is operated by PT Freeport Indonesia (PT-FI), a consolidated subsidiary of Phoenix, Arizona-based company Freeport-McMoRan Inc. (Freeport).

The military and the mine exist in a relationship of mutual benefits, as uncovered by a New York Times Investigation that showed that – between 1998 and 2004 – Freeport paid nearly \$20 million to the Indonesian military. Read more about the mine and our work in Indonesia in PBI UK's new report "The Case for Change" at [pbiousa.org](http://pbiousa.org).

JOIN US AT THE

# PBI-USA NATIONAL GATHERING

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
MAY 23 - 25, 2025



Join the PBI-USA family for our first National Gathering in over a decade. The gathering will take place in the vibrant heart of our nation, Washington, D.C., from May 23 - 25, 2025. This gathering will offer the PBI network in the U.S. space to reconnect, reimagine, and recommit to both the global as well as the U.S.-based work of PBI. Join us in D.C. on Memorial Day Weekend 2025 to help strengthen our collective efforts towards peace and justice!

## PBI-USA NATIONAL GATHERING | WASHINGTON, D.C. | MAY 23 - 25, 2025

### WHAT IS THE PBI-USA NATIONAL GATHERING?

The PBI-USA National Assembly Gatherings are meetings convened as needed by PBI-USA's board of directors (NCC) in order to make structural and organizational changes within PBI-USA, including amending the by-laws. National Gatherings are open to the public, but only National Assembly members can block consensus. The National Assembly consists of anyone residing in the U.S. who is an NCC member, a member of any PBI working committee, current and former PBI staff, interns, volunteers, current and former field volunteers, and all donors and newsletter subscribers - that's you!

### WHY IS PBI-USA HOLDING A NATIONAL GATHERING IN 2025?

The General Assembly, PBI's highest decision making body which meets every 3 years, convened in November 2024 in Lisbon to discuss and adopt a 6-year global strategic plan. Once adopted, all PBI entities must now set goals for the coming years that align with the new global plan. From Standing Rock to the right to peacefully protest, in recent years PBI-USA has joined in solidarity with U.S.-based movements to elevate domestic human rights struggles similar to those faced by the defenders we accompany. In 2025, we will host a National Gathering to review our mandate and vote on whether to explore opportunities to continue supporting local movements. A vote by you, our National Assembly, at a National Gathering is required by our bylaws in order to make any significant changes to PBI-USA or our mandate. We hope to see you Memorial Day Weekend 2025!

### HOW CAN YOU HELP MAKE THE NATIONAL GATHERING A SUCCESS?

- **Attend the National Gathering:** Join us in Washington, D.C., to help shape PBI-USA's future. Register today at [PBIUSA.org](https://PBIUSA.org). A virtual option to participate remotely on Sat, May 24th may be provided
- **Be a Sponsor:** Your financial support is crucial. Consider making a tax-deductible donation to help cover the costs of this event and support our ongoing work. You can donate online at [bit.ly/PBINationalGathering](https://bit.ly/PBINationalGathering)
- **Help Spread the Word:** Help us reach more PBI alumni and supporters by sharing this invitation with your network. Follow us on social media and use the hashtag #PBIUSAGathering2025



**Thank you for your dedication and generosity! Your engagement and support are invaluable as we work together to build a more just and peaceful world. If you have any questions about the National Gathering, please do not hesitate to email [amelia@pbiousa.org](mailto:amelia@pbiousa.org) or call 202-232-0142.**

Scan the QR code to learn more, register, and/or donate to support the National Gathering



# HUMANITY OWES A DEBT TO NATURE

By Andrew Miller, PBI-USA Board Member/NCC

While government officials debated draft text at the COP16 biodiversity summit, held in Cali, Colombia from October 21, 2024 to November 1st, environmental defenders sounded the alarm about the dangers of actually protecting biodiversity in the Amazon rainforest and elsewhere.

Jani Silva (pictured), legal representative for the Amazon Pearl region along Colombia's border with Ecuador, traveled to the city of Cali to speak out. In a public event hosted on the sidelines of the negotiations, Jani outlined the precarious situation she and many others face: "The threats continue against peasant, Afro and Indigenous leaders who defend their territories and environmental rights." The danger emanates from illegal armed groups that have murky ties to multinational oil companies through their local subcontractors.

She said the situation deteriorates when community organizations denounce natural resource exploitation and the resulting contamination from those companies. "Given the risks, we are forced to leave our territory, breaking the connection we have there with the land and our families."

Fortunately, there are some protection strategies that can be put in place. One, Jani outlined, is simply doing the work well and maintaining the confidence of the communities. Another key strategy is accompaniment. "The visibility that international accompaniment offers us, through visits and the general knowledge that they are there with us, provides our community-based organization with a lot of protection."

For the last many years, Peace Brigades International has provided protective accompaniment for Jani and other leaders of the Amazon Pearl in their own territory, where they are at the greatest risk. At COP16, the PBI team (and several former PBI field volunteers, myself included) facilitated dialogues between Jani and ambassadors from Europe and Canada.

At an event hosted in the United Nations pavilion, the Swedish Ambassador to Colombia acknowledged Jani from the stage, qualifying her as "one of the bravest women in Colombia who is defending the environment in the midst of the armed conflict."

Not one to miss an opportunity, Jani personally invited all the ambassadors to travel to the Colombian Amazon and attend the Amazon Pearl's 24th anniversary in late November.

She testified that, "This accompaniment has allowed our process to continue. Believe me, when the violent actors see that our processes are accompanied, they respect us a little more."

At the biodiversity summit, Jani appealed for unity and common endeavors. She said, "All of humanity has a collective debt to nature and we need to exert ourselves to defend, recuperate and pay that debt to the Earth." PBI is committed to seeing that such debt isn't paid with the lives of the brave activists who defend biodiversity for all of us.







# YOU MAKE THIS WORK POSSIBLE

Every day, human rights defenders speak out for the rights of others and the future of our planet. Every day they risk their livelihoods, their liberty and, in many cases, their lives in the struggle for truth, justice, and human rights.

No other organization in the world supports threatened human rights and environmental defenders in the way PBI does. We stand with them, we learn from them, and with your help, we uplift their calls for justice and work 365 days a year to ensure their safety. Thank you for making this work possible!



PBI-USA  
P.O. Box 75880  
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Your support is a critical part of our work. When you give to PBI, you stand in solidarity with over 1,000 activists and movements working on social, economic, and environmental justice issues across 8 countries.



If you can, please give generously by scanning this QR code or go to [pbiusa.org](https://pbiusa.org) to donate today!