

## IN THIS ISSUE

Winter 2019

PBI-USA Updates: Spring Advocacy Tour and Honduras Follow-up	2
PBI Honduras	3
PBI Guatemala	5
PBI Colombia	7
PBI Mexico	9
PBI Kenya, Nepal, and Indonesia	11
In Memoriam: Joseph Levinger	11





# About PBI-USA

## 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, international structure with an office in Brussels, international committees, seven field projects, and over a dozen country groups, including PBI-USA. The work of PBI-USA is made possible through the efforts of a small staff and a host of dedicated interns and volunteers, including PBI-USA's Board of Directors (the National Coordinating Committee or NCC).

### Staff:

Amelia Parker	Pat Davis
Executive Director	Advocacy Director

### National Coordinating Committee (NCC):

Faith Garlington	Andrew Miller
San Jose, CA	Washington, DC
Dr. Matt Messier	Dr. Janet Powers
Burlington, VE	Gettysburg, PA

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P.O. Box 75880  
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Thank you for standing with us alongside human rights defenders at risk

## Join our Team!

Do you have 5 hours per month to dedicate to international peace and solidarity? PBI-USA would love for you to join our board (the NCC). You can express your interest in joining the NCC by calling or emailing Executive Director Amelia Parker at [amelia@pbiousa.org](mailto:amelia@pbiousa.org) or 202-232-0142.



## About PBI-USA

In 2019, PBI-USA continued to support PBI projects in Mexico, Colombia, Honduras, Guatemala, Kenya, Indonesia, and Nepal with advocacy support focused on Honduras, Guatemala, and Mexico. We hosted an advocacy tour in the spring to Washington, D.C. and New York for two defenders, Miriam Pixtun Monroy and Carlos Padilla, both of whom work on land and environmental protection in Guatemala and Honduras respectively. A follow-up visit to Honduras in the fall was then carried out by the PBI-USA Advocacy Director, Pat Davis (pictured above left).

Miriam Pixtun Monroy (pictured left on the cover) has led the Peaceful Resistance of La Puya since communities around the mining project began organizing in 2012. Miriam discussed La Puya's successful lawsuit against US-based company Kappes, Cassiday, & Assoc, which led to a suspension of mining operations. The company in turn has brought a \$300 million arbitration claim against Guatemala, alleging violations of the Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement.

Carlos Padilla, pictured above right with Advocacy Director Pat Davis, is a sociologist with the Honduran Center for the Promotion of Community Development (CEPHRODEC). During his visit, Carlos stressed the increasing criminalization of defenders resisting large-scale projects in Honduras. In November 2019, Pat traveled to Honduras for a follow-up visit with Carlos and the folks at CEPHRODEC who continue to witness increased violence against those who are critical of President Hernandez's government.

Read more about the work of PBI and the groups and individuals we accompany in the project updates below.



## PBI-Honduras

PBI has been working with human rights defenders in Honduras for nearly a decade now. The field project began in May 2010 when PBI received a request for accompaniment from the Honduran Human Rights Coordination Group (Plataforma de Derechos Humanos de Honduras). Pictured above, PBI accompanies CEHPRODEC during an October 2019 march in opposition to mining and in defense of water.

There are several elements of the current Honduran context that are particularly concerning and directly impact the security of human rights defenders. In September 2019, the Trump Administration reached an agreement with Honduras that will allow the US to refuse asylum claims of anyone who has transited through Honduras on their journey to the US border. Such individuals will be returned to Honduras to seek asylum there. The agreement is based on the presumption that Honduras is a safe third country in which any asylum seeker could have first reasonably sought asylum. Many Venezuelan, Cuban, Nicaraguan, and African refugees cross through Honduras as they flee their own countries. As the Washington Office on Latin America points out, Honduras' homicide rate is eight times that of the US. Businesses suffer extortion threats so regularly that the Honduran Chamber of Commerce no longer publishes an official registry of its members. The US State Department warns travelers to avoid all public transport in the country because gang members are known to kill drivers for falling behind on extortion payments. The US has reached similar agreements with El Salvador and Guatemala.

In addition, the narcotic industry in Honduras generates high levels of violence and forced displacement across the country. High-level authorities such as the Honduran President have been accused of links to the drug trade, indicating the insidious nature of corruption in the country. Another important aspect of the current context in Honduras is that the Hernández government has been particularly violent against those who oppose him, in an attempt to eliminate any sign of dissent towards his authority. This includes continued use of live bullets and poisonous tear gas to disrupt protests against his government. This strategy against dissent includes the criminalization of human rights defenders in order to silence their resistance. Many social leaders have been killed in the past few months, including students calling for the current President's resignation.

Human rights analysts have compared the number of assassinations with death squad activity in Honduras during the 1980s. Land and territory defenders are especially at risk. Since 2013, nine indigenous leaders have been murdered for defending their lands' natural resources from exploitation - whether in the form of mining projects, illegal logging, or other economic developments. This current Honduran context makes it difficult for defenders to carry out their work as their civic space is being threatened and often directly shut down.

In November 2019, Advocacy Director Pat Davis traveled to Honduras for a week to learn about current country conditions, visit PBI-accompanied organizations, and meet with the PBI Honduras Project. Along with Communications and Advocacy Official Anaclara Padilla, Pat met with the staff of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights for an update on the human rights situation in the country. Visits with PBI-accompanied organizations followed.





## PBI-Honduras

The first meeting was with accompanied-group Arcoiris (whose members are pictured above with Pat and Anaclara centered). Arcoiris was founded in 2003 with the aim of empowering the LGTBI community in Honduras, offering comprehensive health information to the LGTBI public, and defending and promoting the human right of sexual diversity. Arcoiris members are at continual risk; more than twenty members of the LGTBI community were murdered in Honduras in 2019.

In La Esperanza, four hours by bus from the capital, Pat and Anaclara met with staff of the Civic Council of Popular and Indigenous Organizations of Honduras (COPINH) and discussed the case against David Castillo, who is awaiting trial for helping to plan the 2016 murder of COPINH leader Berta Caceres. Once back in Tegucigalpa, Pat and Anaclara met with Berta Oliva, director of COFADEH, who gave an overview of the human rights situation in Honduras, stressing that the situation is the worst it has been in decades. In a meeting with Espacio-ACI, a coalition of international organizations working in Honduras, Pat and Anaclara learned about efforts to construct a housing development in a protected zone near the capital. Those resisting these efforts have been attacked by police, including a boy who was hospitalized with bullet wounds. At the meeting, Pat and Anaclara were able to speak with the relatives of the boy who suffered the police attack.

Pat and Anaclara also met with members of the National Office of Campesino Workers (CNTC) who were preparing to go on tour in Europe with PBI and who fleshed out more details about the resistance to the construction of homes in La Tigre National Park. They also met with Carlos Padilla of the Center for Promotion of Community Development (CEPHRODEC) to follow-up on his advocacy visit to Washington, DC earlier in the spring and receive updates on the organization's work with communities affected by megaprojects.

Meetings with the Context Analysis section of the National Protection Mechanism and with National Human Rights Commission (CONADEH ) rounded out the visit. With CONADEH and the National Protection Mechanism officials, Pat and Anaclara discussed the likely human rights impact of the US's safe third country agreement with Honduras. A meeting with the US Embassy at the end of the week provided an opportunity to exchange views and share the information gleaned throughout the week from human rights defenders. To read the latest updates from the project, visit [pbi-honduras.org](http://pbi-honduras.org).





## PBI-Guatemala

PBI works within three main thematic issues in Guatemala in order to better protect human rights defenders: the fight against impunity, land rights, and the defense of territory.

With regard to access to land, PBI continues to work with the Community Council of the Highlands (CCDA). Pictured above, second from the left, is the leader of CCDA's Alta Verapaz/Baja Verapaz office, Lesbia Artolo Teyul. PBI accompanied members of the CCDA in 2019 in their work to unite small-scale farmers and indigenous organizations to address agrarian conflicts in Guatemala. In addition, PBI accompanied members of the CCDA during a court hearing regarding the murder of Ramón Choc Sacrab – a member of the CCDA and an indigenous authority of the Ixloc San Pedrito de Cobán community in Alta Verapaz.

In the fight against impunity, PBI accompanied members of the Human Rights Firm (BDH) to hearings in two cases in 2019. The first case is the Ixil Genocide Case, where several military defendants were present to testify against high-ranking officers of the army on trial for crimes of genocide and the forced disappearances of over 1421 victims during the government of Romeo García between 1978 and 1982. The hearing has been suspended twice and now has been further postponed.

The second case, involving the Virgin of the Assumption Safe Home in San José Pinula (Guatemala), involves a fire that broke out in March 2017 and took the lives of 41 girls and injured 15 others. Currently, a complaint has been filed against the 15 surviving victims claiming their responsibility for the fire. PBI accompanies the lawyers who represent these victims against this complaint and observed the court hearings for several days. Every month, PBI also accompanies the TZK'AT - Network of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism - during a ceremony organized in Guatemala City's central square to remember the 41 girls killed in the tragic fire.

PBI accompanies TZK'AT in their work in defense of their territory. TZK'AT, an organization of indigenous women defending women's rights, natural resources, and territory in different regions of Guatemala, was formed by 10 women human rights defenders in October 2015. Many members are part of other organizations and movements working in defense of the territory and for the rights of indigenous peoples and women. These women defenders have a history of being politically persecuted, suffering stigmatization, death threats, territorial political displacement, and criminalization as a result of their work. PBI has provided protective accompaniment to TZK'AT since February 2018.





## PBI-Guatemala

**"It is important for me to be seen as a defender  
because it allows me to have a life with a different meaning" – Lorena Cabnal**

Lorena Cabnal (pictured above) is a woman human rights defender of Maya-Xinca origin and a core member of the TZK'AT Network of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism. Lorena has worked alongside women in communities throughout Guatemala for many years. She is an advocate of "community feminism," where women come together to collectively defend their bodies and the earth against sexual aggressions, femicides, and territorial violence. Lorena incorporates ancestral healing practices in her work of transforming violence experienced by women. Her work is an inspiring example of peacebuilding from the grassroots.

Violence against women continues to be a constant phenomenon throughout the world, a structural wound which, in the case of Guatemala, is demonstrated in the high-rate of murders of women in the country: there were over 570 murders of women in 2019 by yearend. Women human rights defenders, especially indigenous women, are particularly vulnerable to attacks and criminalization for defending their land and territory.

On September 4, 2019, President Jimmy Morales announced a State of Emergency in 22 municipalities across Guatemala after the lifeless bodies of three soldiers were discovered in El Estor, Izabal. Following the discovery, Morales ordered security forces to carry out arrests and seize weapons from individuals he called "pseudo peasants and defenders of human and peasant rights in the region."

Under the State of Emergency, multiple rights were restricted, such as freedom of movement, assembly, and protest, and some detentions without a warrant were allowed, as well as interrogations of persons detained or imprisoned by bodies other than judicial agents. Numerous Guatemalan social organizations expressed their fears over the potential for abuses, as the State of Emergency was implemented in areas characterized by high social conflict caused by large business megaprojects, such as hydroelectric, mining, or agribusiness.

On September 11, PBI accompanied social, agrarian, indigenous, and Garifuna organizations to present an injunction to the Constitutional Court against the State of Emergency, arguing that it violated international standards, is not justified, is disproportionate, and seeks to militarize indigenous peoples' territories. On November 11, the State of Emergency came to an end but the impacts of the policy on the population, according to PBI-Guatemala, have yet to be fully understood. Visit [pbi-guatemala.org](http://pbi-guatemala.org) for the latest updates.





## PBI-Colombia

After one year of Colombian President Iván Duque Márquez's government administration, tension and alarm regarding the increase in human rights violations continue to grow. The Cauca department, for example, has been especially affected in the last few months of 2019 by the assassination of social leaders and Indigenous Guard members, a multitude of threatening pamphlets, and the alleged arrival and territorial control of the Sinaloa Cartel, which especially caught the international community's attention. The high levels of conflict in the country also became apparent to the international community when a humanitarian mission found itself in the middle of crossfire between illegal armed actors in the Suárez municipality. It was in this same municipality where, on September 2, a mayoral candidate was assassinated along with five other persons when her car was incinerated. The candidate had previously reported threats made against her and one week before the crime, the Ombudsman's Office (Defensoría del Pueblo) had warned of the risk she faced.

Another concerning development was the announcement made on August 29, 2019 by some members of the former FARC-EP – including a main negotiator of the Peace Agreement using the alias Iván Márquez – about taking up arms again. This is in stark contrast to the progress of 2018 when the FARC guerrilla, now a political party, Common Alternative Revolutionary Force, participated for the first time in national elections, definitively leaving its weapons behind to embark on their political project. These events create concern regarding an increase in militarization of the territories and a resurgence of the country's existing armed conflict and humanitarian crisis.

The slow pace of the accord's implementation is contributing to the continuing violence in areas affected by the conflict as concern grows regarding whether the full peace accord will be implemented, particularly the portions that ensure reparations, non-repetition, truth and justice to the victims of the conflict.

At the beginning of October, various trade unions called for a National Strike to commence on November 21, 2019 in response to the social, economic and environmental policies of the government of President Iván Duque and specifically in response to a bombing by state security forces in the San Vicente del Caguán municipality (Caquetá department) where 8 to 18 minors were killed, according to public sources. Other sectors of Colombian civil society joined the call for the National Strike and after the first day, the decision was made to continue and to call for a national dialogue about the 13 demands that had already been communicated to the government.





These demands include: the urgent need to implement the Final Peace Agreement; to take comprehensive action to end killings, threats, smear campaigns, and stigmatization against human rights defenders; to adjust economic, social, and environmental policies so that they benefit the whole population; and to offer real guarantees for the defense of human rights and the protection of the environment. Sixty-six indigenous communities from the Amazon region also delivered their own specific and differential demands to safeguard their territories and the existence of their peoples.

Ahead of the strike, on November 19, at around 3am, the national police and the Public Prosecutor's Office carried out a coordinated operation in which they simultaneously raided and searched the homes of 37 human rights defenders, social leaders, and alternative media services. According to sources, those raided were participating in the National Strike. The Corporation for Legal Freedom (Corporación Jurídica Libertad - CJL), an organization accompanied by PBI, reported that in several cases the state security forces did not show a search warrant, nor did they allow families to record the process.

During the strike and later on November 23, PBI Colombia teams observed on multiple occasions the excessive use of force by the Police and the Mobile Anti-Riot Squad (Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios - ESMAD) against protesters, including the use of tear gas, stun bombs (bombas aturdidoras), and serious physical attacks against individuals. PBI adds our voice to the concerns expressed by different national and international human rights organizations in light of the lack of guarantees and excessive use of force by the state security forces during the social protests.

Before the launch of the National Strike, PBI was able to hold a series of events throughout the country to commemorate the 25th anniversary of the PBI-Colombia Project, culminating in a final commemoration on November 20, one day before the National Strike was to begin, at the Museo Nacional de Colombia in Bogotá. On October 31, the staff and volunteers of PBI's project in Colombia (pictured above) gathered together in Barrancabermeja with many of the human rights defenders they accompany to remember moments and give a special tribute to the organizations accompanied by PBI in this beautiful region of the country. As noted in the book *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*, the first PBI team arrived in Bogotá in October 1994 and by January 1995 had established a presence in Barrancabermeja after an invitation by CREDHOS, the Regional Corporation for the Defense of Human Rights, whose members continue to receive the accompaniment of PBI. To read the latest updates from the project, visit [pbicolombia.org](http://pbicolombia.org).





2019 has been a year of struggle, of resistance, and of extraordinary bravery from those who, on a daily basis, put their lives at risk to defend human rights. After two decades of struggle, the Rarámuri community of Choréachi in the Sierra Tarahumara mountain range achieved an important ruling in late 2018 which declares that the boundaries delineating their ancestral territory must be respected and that the logging permits that were illegally granted to a non-indigenous agrarian community are invalid. The community of Choréachi is a landmark case that clearly demonstrates the structural racism that infringes upon the human rights of indigenous people in Mexico and facilitates the dispossession of their natural resources without free, prior, or informed consent. The community of Choréachi is still awaiting the implementation of this ruling, however, so that they can start to enjoy their territory in its entirety.

Since 1973, fourteen defenders of land rights and natural resources from the Sierra Tarahumara have been assassinated. Most recently, Isidro Baldenegro and Julián Carrillo, who were killed in 2017 and 2018 respectively, were both Rarámuri community leaders. PBI accompanies Alianza Sierra Madre A.C., a human rights organization, who has worked alongside the indigenous communities of the Sierra Tarahumara for more than two decades to ensure their rights are respected.

In March 2019, PBI accompanied Tita Radilla (pictured above center) and AFADEM (The Association of Families of Detained and Disappeared Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico) during the sixth excavation activity to search for disappeared people. The excavations, carried out between March 25th and April 13th, took place in the Ciudad de Los Servicios, an area that was a military base during the 70s and 80s and headquarters of the 27th Battalion in Atoyac de Álvarez. The ex-military base was the last place in which Rosendo Radilla Pacheco was seen alive in August 1974. Rosendo was a social leader and father of Tita Radilla and along with 470 others was forcefully disappeared in the 1970s by members of the military.

In 2009, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights issued a ruling against the Mexican State in the Radilla case. Ten years later, the reparations dictated by the Court, such as "the effective search and immediate recovery of Mr Rosendo Radilla Pacheco, or his remains," are being carried out and organized by members of the Public Prosecutor's Office (FGR) and other national bodies. At the request of Tita Radilla, PBI accompanied AFADEM during the start of the excavations.





Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador took office after campaigning on a platform focused heavily on combating corruption and insecurity and bringing peace and reconciliation to the Mexican people. In a 2019 report written by PBI Mexico and the Washington Office for Latin America (WOLA), recommendations are offered for how the new government can approach an important aspect of this endeavor: creating a safer and more enabling environment for journalists and human rights defenders to carry out their important work.

One of those recommendations is for the government to strengthen the Federal Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists and to continue supporting the implementation of Chihuahua's Contingency Plan. The Plan, focused on addressing the root causes of violence against journalists and human rights defenders in that state, was created from Chihuahua's early warning system for the protection of human rights defenders by members of civil society and representatives of the Federal and State governments. The initiative was created by Mexican civil society due to the violent context in Chihuahua, which puts it among the three most dangerous states in the country with regard to the defense of human rights. In July 2019, PBI accompanied the seventh revision of the Contingency Plan's working tables, a valuable continuation of this important public policy effort.

Also in summer 2019, PBI accompanied EDUCA (Servicios para una Educación Alternativa) during Oaxaca's first ever "Guelaguetza" against mining in the municipality San Martín de los Cansecos. Various communities from the Valles Centrales in Oaxaca joined together to commemorate the state's annual "Rebellion Against Mining Day" and to reaffirm "¡Sí a la vida, no a la minería!" (Yes to life, no to mining!).

As 2019 came to a close, the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center held a public procession (pictured above) that called for justice for human rights defender Arnulfo Cerón Soriano who was found dead in Tlapa, Guerrero on November 20. During the search for Arnulfo, his wife Gabriela Pablo described his work in a petition: "Arnulfo for several years accompanied social movements, such as the families of the 43 missing students of Ayotzinapa. Recently he was supporting street merchants in the city of Tlapa, who were abused by the municipal president of this town."

PBI remains concerned about the security of defenders working in Guerrero, particularly that of Tlachinollan. The homicide of Mr. Cerón brought the preliminary count of defenders killed in Mexico during 2019 to at least 18. To read the latest updates from the project, visit [pbi-mexico.org](http://pbi-mexico.org).



# PBI Special Projects: Indonesia, Kenya, & Nepal



PBI Kenya continues to support the development of Women Human Rights Defender (WHRD) Tool Kit Organizers. Pictured left, Junior, as he is popularly known, is one of PBI Kenya's newest Toolkit organizers. Junior lives in the Making, Kibera settlement. His human rights work dates back to 2014 when he assisted a 7-year old girl seek justice in a case involving gender-based violence. After this case, he felt inspired to continue human rights work for his community. He has since earned a degree in sociology and completed a training on prevention and responding to gender-based violence. Junior is passionate about human rights and believes that people's rights must be protected and respected in order for communities to advance and develop.

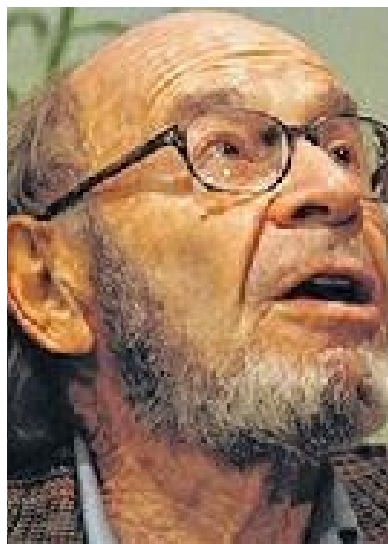


PBI continues to support the work of the Nepal Monitor Project. Pictured left, Nepal Monitor and COCAP-Collective Campaign for Peace staff and key board members gather in November 2019 to discuss the current status of the project and a vision for the future of COCAP monitoring work through 2020 and beyond. Discussions covered all components of NMP including mapping, advocacy, training, outreach, and protection, as well as the funding, structure, and internal capacities needed to be effective in supporting defenders be more informed and safer advocates in their work.



PBI continues to support capacity building and psycho-social support workshops (such as pictured left) for human rights defenders in Indonesia, where there was a dramatic rise in attacks against defenders in 2019. The safety network that our program alumni have built over the years was tested to its limits when faced with attacks against environmental defenders across the archipelago; oppression of anti-racism protestors in Papua; and the selective application of Information Technology (IT) laws to criminalize online activism.

## Remembering Joseph Levinger by Karen Beetle



Joseph Levinger (1921-2018) was a strong supporter of PBI-USA at its inception. Joe was a brilliant theoretical nuclear physicist. As a graduate student at the University of Chicago, his lab produced the first controlled nuclear chain reaction in 1942. That this early work went on to become the Manhattan Project caused him great consternation. Joe became a Quaker, a pacifist and a life long supporter of human rights and peace. The Physics Department at RPI brought him to the Capital District where he joined the Albany Friends Meeting. Also my home meeting, I met Joe as a young child. When I returned from working for PBI in Guatemala in 1986 and sought to start a PBI Field Office and training program for PBI volunteers, Joe was ready to help. Our first PBI orientation weekends and volunteer trainings took place at his house in Rensselaer. More than a dozen of us would take over his house, stay upstairs, cook in his kitchen and conduct trainings in the yard and house. Joe's support and generosity were critical in these years as we were forming the network that would become PBI USA.

Joe took part in two PBI delegations to Guatemala – one of which accompanied refugees returning to their home communities. He continued to support PBI in subsequent years with a deep knowledge of the importance of human rights and PBI's model of accompaniment that sought to carve out space for justice and freedom to be planted and to grow. Joe's quiet presence and deep sincerity is missed and his generosity, including a very generous bequest, is flourishing in the PBI-USA of today.





Peace Brigades International - USA  
P.O. Box 75880  
Washington, DC 20013  
[www.pbiusa.org](http://www.pbiusa.org) | 202-232-0142



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

**Together, we can provide life-giving support to communities and human rights defenders whose lives and work are threatened by violence because of the important work they do.**

**Visit [PBI-USA.org](http://PBI-USA.org) today to make a contribution and get involved.**

Front Cover Photo: Advocacy Director Pat Davis (center) in front of the U.S. Supreme Court with accompanied defenders Miriam Pixtun Monroy (Guatemala) left and Carlos Padilla (Honduras) right, during the April 2019 advocacy tour. Back Cover Photo: Executive Director Amelia Parker, Advocacy Director Pat Davis, accompanied defenders Carlos Padilla (Honduras) and Johan Giraldo Ospina, President, Gustavo A. Marulanda Corporation for Human Rights (Colombia), and former PBI field volunteer and Spanish language interpreter Jacob Blickenov pose at the Ecumenical Advocacy Days in Washington, D.C. following their workshop on challenges for environmental defenders in Latin America. April 2019

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