

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALA PROJECT

MIP - MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE – GUATEMALA

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION
2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: WITHIN GUATEMALA
 - 2.1 MEETINGS WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES, DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND INTERNATIONAL ENTITIES
 - 2.2 MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
 - 2.3 ACCOMPANIMENT
 - 2.4 FOLLOW-UP
 - 2.5 OBSERVATION
3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA – OUTSIDE GUATEMALA
4. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

The closing of the Peace Archive generates protests

Guatemala, 02.07.2012 (PL).- With actions against the Secretary of the Peace, Antonio Arenales Forno, ex-employees of the Peace Archive Directorate (DAP), expressed their disagreement of the closure of the archives, which has been operating over the last 4 years. Marco Tulio Álvarez, ex-director of the DAP, indicated that with the help of civil society movements, they are organising the visit of the human rights special rapporteur of the UN. Employees will produce a series of eight reports which will highlight the advances that the archive work has had in digitalising the documents.

Organizations demand clarification on the intimidations received by human rights defenders

Guatemala, 14.07.2012 (AC).- Civil society groups are demanding the investigation of intimidations received by human rights activists, in particular those received against unionist leader Melvy Lizeth Camey Rojas, who was badly injured, and the indigenous leader Domingo Hernández Ixcoy. According to a press release by the Frente Nacional de Lucha (FNL), these threats and intimidations against civil society leaders, among them the threats received by Camey and the murder of the lawyer Ricardo Morataya add themselves to the 2011 murder of César Efidio Carrillo, union leader who was shot and killed. The FNL demanded the Public Prosecutors Office to investigate the three cases and the union leader's charges of death threats they have received. For their part, human rights organisations asked for the clarification of the threats made against the life of Domingo Hernández Ixcoy, which came to light after his office was ransacked, wherein a threatening note was found stating "leave this note over his body".

The increase of army presence in Cuarto Pueblo frightens the community

Guatemala, 17.07.2012 (AC).- The communities of Cuarto Pueblo, located in Playa Grande, Ixcán, Quiché, denounced the presence of 30 soldiers and the lack of information provided by the State about the reasons for this unit being there - one of the areas most affected by the internal armed conflict. Anselmo Roldán of the Asociación de Defensa de los Derechos Humanos del Área de Ixcán (ADDAHI) denounced on the website CERIGUA that the military have entered their schools without permission from relevant staff and without respecting school hours. The communities met on the 15th of July to ask for the removal of the army units, and in a press release by ADDAHI, asked the President to take the necessary steps, thus respecting the wishes of the indigenous community.

LAND

The reduction of inequalities is the key to sustainable development

Guatemala, 10.07.2012 (AC).- It is important to know the key role of territory, the reduction of inequalities that worsen the economic, social and environmental situation, as elements of sustainable development. The meeting of the Special Committee on Population and Development 2012, and the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (CEPAL) convened in Quito, Ecuador, and counted on the presence of regional delegates, CEPAL representatives, Government functionaries and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The participants called on governments to formulate development strategies for cities with the inclusion of territorial planning and environmental sustainability.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION

No agreement is reached on mining disputes

Guatemala, 23.07.2012 (AC).- Mining disputes intensified on the 20th of July during the Public Hearing that occurred in the Constitutional Court (CC), where indigenous groups, entrepreneurs and the Public Prosecutors Office expressed their positions in relation to the mining law. The indigenous lawyer Lucia Xoj, asked for the annulment of the law claiming it to be unconstitutional, since it contravened the Law of Appeals. Karla Valenzuela Elíasrs of the Prosecutors Office for Constitutional Affairs asked for a reform so as to include public consultation rights, as set out by the 169 Convention of the ILO. For his part, Mario Fuentes Destarac, lawyer of the entrepreneurs rejected the modifications and emphasised that the Convention had not been ratified when the mining law (as it stands now) was approved, and that the current proposal for a new mining law fulfils all of the requirements.

Popular Court condemns Goldcorp's harmful mining projects

Guatemala, 20.07.2012 (AC).- On the 14th and 15th of July the International Popular Health Court (TPIS) condemned the actions of mining company Goldcorp in the projects located in Valle de Siria, Honduras; San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Guatemala; and Carrizalillo, México. The Court highlighted the damage such projects have on the environment, on quality of life and on the health of local populations, and reiterated that they are an affront to the free determination of communities. The Court also criticised the irresponsible actions of the States involved, and demanded that reparations be paid to the communities involved. According to the Observatorio de Conflictos Mineros de América Latina (OCMAL), the implementation of extractive projects have provoked 165 conflicts across Latin America, 35 of these in mesoamericana. The Court also noted how the Canadian Government directly intervenes in the affairs of other States, to reform legislative frameworks and to curry political favour.

OTHERS

President Otto Pérez Molina opens military brigade in Petén

Guatemala, 09.07.2012 (AC).- Otto Pérez Molina inaugurated on the 6th of July the 7th military infantry jungle brigade in the municipality of La Libertad, in the northern province of Peten. The brigade will count on 500 units and will cover the 5 municipalities of San Andrés, San Francisco, La Libertad, Las Cruces and Sayaxché in the frontier of San Juan Sacatepéquez, Guatemala. The military base installed in San Juan Sacatepéquez has generated unhappiness among the populace, who on the 30th of June marched in protest, with 6000 people carrying placards, amongst which could be read "we want teachers not soldiers."

Sources: Agencia Cerigua (AC), Prensa Libre (PL), Siglo Veintiuno (SV), El Periódico (EP)

2. PBI-GUATEMALA ACTIVITIES: IN GUATEMALA

Team: Cayena Abello (Colombia), Francisco Bernal (Colombia), Ilaria Tosello (Italy), Phil Murwill (United Kingdom), Christa Hijkoop (Netherlands), Lucía Gorosito (Argentina/Spain), Claudia Molina (Argentina), Aline Herrera (Switzerland/Mexico), Kristel Best (Peru) and Valdivia Moutawali (Netherlands).

2.1. MEETINGS WITH DIPLOMATIC CORPS AND GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES

Meetings with national and international authorities are an important tool for PBI's efforts to make our objectives and the nature of our work known. Through these meetings, in cases where it is necessary, and with a reserved manner, we express our concerns about critical situations that we have come to know first-hand from the work we carry out across the country.

International Authorities and other international entities in Guatemala:

- Jennifer Echeverria and Birgit Vleugels, Cooperation Officers of the EU's Program for Human Rights, Guatemala City
- Marina Comandulli, Human Rights Officer, Economic Social and Cultural Rights division, of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

Guatemalan Authorities:

- José Mario Cantoral Recinos, Governor of Jalapa
- Otoniel Sandoval Bonilla, Sub-commissioner of the 22nd National Civil Police Station, Jalapa

2.2 MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The team in the field meets periodically with civil society organisations to follow up on the situation of human rights defenders, to inform one another about the work being done, and to gather information that contributes to the processes of contextual analysis on specific issues in Guatemala.

Guatemalan Civil Society:

- Marco Canteo, Executive Director of the Institute of Comparative Studies in Penal Sciences of Guatemala ICCPG, Guatemala City
- Iduvina Hernández, Executive Director of Security and Democracy (SEDEM), Guatemala City
- Jorge López, Executive Director of the Organization for the Aiding of a Sexually Integrated Response to AIDS (OASIS),

Guatemala City

- Andrea Hernández, Lawyer, and Julio González, Ecological Collective Mother Earth, Guatemala City
- Isabel Sáenz, National Organizer, Women's Sector, Guatemala City
- Edwin Canil, Lawyer, Centre for Legal Human Rights Action (CALDH), Guatemala City

International Organisations and Agencies

- Coordination of International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG / ACOGUATE)
- Forum of International NGOs (FONGI)
- German Aid Cooperation (GIZ)

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENT

National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows, CONAVIGUA

During the month of July, CONAVIGUA has continued on its workshops and accompanying exhumations. Before an inhumation of war victims in San Martín Jilotepeque (Chimaltenango), on the 4th and 5th of July the vehicle of the Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala (FAFG) was stolen. Within the car were the bones of the war victim. We have thus maintained regular contact with CONAVIGUA members at their office in Guatemala city, as well as regular telephone calls.

Background: CONAVIGUA carries out exhumations and inhumations in different departments throughout Guatemala, above all in Quiché, Chimaltenango, and the Verapaces, as part of its work towards the recuperation of the collective memory of Guatemala's recent troubled history. These processes provoke very tense situations in rural communities where victims and perpetrators live side by side, occasionally culminating in threats aimed at stopping the work of the women of CONAVIGUA. Due to increasing requests from the communities in which CONAVIGUA works, the organisation has expanded its work offering legal and organisational advice to communities in the process of organising themselves. In 2010, CONAVIGUA accompanied this process in San Juan Sacatepéquez and in Uspantán, where CONAVIGUA supported the preparation of a "good faith" community consultation on extractive industry projects. We have periodically accompanied the association since August 2003 with visits to its office and during its members' journeys around the country. Various members of the organisation were subjected to grave death threats in 2010, due to the work that they were carrying out.

Association for the Protection of the Las Granadillas Mountain, APMG

During the month of July, the APMG spread the word on the importance of declaring the Granadillas mountain a protected area. On July 19th we accompanied members of the APMG to meetings in Zacapa along with members of the Catholic and Lutheran Church, members of the Central Campesino Coordination Nuevo Día (CCCCND), the Ecological Collective Mother Earth and the Health Union, among others. The purpose was to spread the word on the problems affecting the mountain. We also observed a press conference on July 31st on declaring the mountain a protected area.

Background: APMG was created in 2003 in Zacapa to protect the ecosystem of Las Granadillas Mountain (the principal source of water and natural diversity in the region) due to diverse threats identified by the local population: illegal logging, monoculture, deforestation, large-scale cattle farming and the diversion of water sources. The organisation is supported by the Lutheran Church in Guatemala (ILUGUA), led in the region by Reverend José Pilar Álvarez Cabrera, and the Madre Selva Collective. One of APMG's goals is to have the mountain designated a protected area. However, existing economic interests in the land have made APMG's work dangerous, and its members have faced diverse types of persecution and threats since they denounced the illegal logging trade and started, with the population of the La Trementina community, a permanent social monitoring process of licences granted and logging carried out on the mountain's private estates. We have accompanied APMG since August 2008 and, since then, have observed the spaces for dialogues in which the Association has participated with public authorities and private actors. At the beginning of 2009 and the end of 2010, the permanent conflicts between the owners of private estates on the mountain and the population of La Trementina and the APMG led to criminal accusations against members of the Association and the community, based on complaints lodged by, among others, Mr Juan José Olaverueth, owner of the Tachoró Estate. In both cases, the accusations were linked to APMG's work promoting the protection of the mountain. Also, in both cases, the cases were thrown out in the first court hearing before the judge. In total nine people have been affected by unfounded criminal accusations (three in 2009 and eight in 2010). José Pilar Álvarez Cabrera has been the target of death threats and defamation in the local media during these conflicts.

Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María Xalapán, AMISMAXAJ.

On the July 12th we accompanied members of AMISMAXAJ on a trip to Jalapa aimed at providing a workshop on the second module of the feminist defense of mind and body course. We also accompanied them to a meeting to the Santa María Xalapán Mountain, where they met with Communitarin Xınca Action of Xalapán (ACOXX), the Parish Council and other organisations, wherein AMISMAXAJ expressed their concern at the delegitimisation of women in the fight for land, for the environment and in relation to existing conflicts.

Background: AMISMAXAJ was founded in February 2004 as an association of women workers and became part of the Women's Sector in June of the same year. AMISMAXAJ is made up of 75 women leaders representing 15 Xinka communities from the Santa María Xalapán Mountain (Jalapa). They work at the local, departmental and national levels in opposition to all forms of patriarchal, neo-liberal, racist, homophobic and lesbophobic oppression, and have established strategic territorial and national alliances to promote their political actions. The association works actively in the region of Jalapa, promoting women's rights, the revitalisation of the Xinka ethnicity and the defence of land and territory. In particular, it is actively working to defend natural resources and to monitor and raise awareness about plans for mining and oil extraction in the region. We have accompanied AMISMAXAJ since July 2009. Various members of the organisation were subjected to grave death threats in 2009 and 2010, due to the work that they carry out.

'New Day' Chortí Campesino Central Coordinator.

During the month of July the CCCND have informed us that the threats have continued against them due to inter-communitarian disputes over land registration and ownership. On the 3rd of July we accompanied members of the CCCND to the Justice of the Peace and to the Public Prosecutors Office in Chiquimula, where they were summoned to a process of reconciliation. On the July 26th we accompanied members of the CCCND to a meeting and a general assembly in Las Flores, Jocotán, where there was emphasis on peaceful coexistence.

Background: "New Day" Chortí Campesino Central Coordinator is part of the Agrarian Platform, working in the municipalities of Camotán, Jocotán, Olopa and San Juan Hermita in the department of Chiquimula. It trains and informs rural communities on issues relating to the rural economy, the environment, rights and land, in coordination with other local organisations. In 2006 New Day became aware of construction projects for three hydroelectric plants in two of the Department's municipalities: the projects El Puente and El Orégano in Jocotán and the project Caparjá, in Camotán. They form part of the largest project of the Electrical Interconnection System for Central American Countries (SIEPAC). As part of its work, the organisation has shared this information with communities in the area, enabling the evaluation and analysis of the environmental effects and impact on local economies that this, and other development projects planned for the region, may have. They carried out this work in relation to the project known as the "Technological Corridor", that is intended to link the Atlantic coast with the Pacific Coast in Guatemala, which in turn forms part of the biggest plan produced under the Mesoamerican Project (successor of the Plan Puebla-Panama, PPP). Members of New Day say the lack of information and consultation of Chiquimula's communities by public institutions is a constant source of conflict. PBI has accompanied New Day since 2009. Several members of the association have been threatened and attacked due to their work with the communities. In 2010, members of the organisation denounced death threats and intimidation by unknown armed persons. Also, a number of national and local media outlets carried statements from local authorities accusing members of New Day and the Camoteca Campesino Association as being linked to social protests demanding improved information regarding the construction of the Technological Corridor, due to affect the region.

Q'a molo Q'i San Juan– People of San Juan Unite.

During July Q'a molo Q'i San Juan were in contact with the Mayor of San Juan Sacatepéquez to ask for the removal of the military brigade installed near by. On July 12th Q'a molo Q'i San Juan met with the OHCHR where they discussed complaints against mega projects. On the 17th of July Q'a molo Q'i San Juan participated in the public hearing on reforming the mining law (see above under News). This month we registered two worrying incidents – the disappearance of a minor in the village of San Antonio Las Trojes and the theft of a vehicle which belonged to a witness involved in a case against three captured men. We accompanied members of the organization to the General Prosecutors Office as a follow up to the child's disappearance.

We also observed two audiences in the Justice of the Peace in Mixco, in the case of the murder of Francisco Tepeu of San Juan Sacatepéquez, for which the accused Faustino Camey, Efraín and Porfirio Cotzoyaj took three years imprisonment. On the 9th of July various witnesses presented evidence, while on the 24th the process was suspended due to a no-show of a witness.

Background: Q'a molo Q'i San Juan-People of San Juan Unite is an organisation that brings together neighbours from diverse communities in the municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez, that participate in the struggle to defend territory and natural resources in the region. Since 2006, the Guatemalan company Cementos Progreso S.A. has been working on "project San Juan", which includes the construction of a factory and a quarry in the San Gabriel Buena Vista estate and the villages of San Jose Ocaña and San Antonio Las Trojes I and II. Cementos Progreso has an 80% share in the project, while the remaining 20% belongs to the Swiss multinational company Holcim. On 13 May 2007, without the support of the municipality, the communities of San Juan Sacatepéquez carried out a community consultation on the factory's installation. 8,950 people participated, of which 8,946 voted against and four in favour of the factory. Although the mayor and the municipal council agreed to take into account the results of the consultation prior to the authorisation of any licence for construction, the construction work continued. During more than three years, the residents of San Juan Sacatepéquez have made numerous complaints about human rights abuses and a criminalisation campaign against them. The dialogue process in which various Guatemalan public authorities and institutions have participated has ended without reaching a resolution or transformation of the conflict.¹ PBI has accompanied Q'a molo Q'i San Juan since December 2009, following a request from the organisation due to threats and persecution against several of its members and the communities it represents.

¹ Further background information in the PBI Special Report published in 2010:
http://www.pbiquatemala.org/fileadmin/user_files/projects/guatemala/files/english/Mujeres_Completo_ING.pdf

Council of Cunén Communities.

During July we intensified our contact with the CCC, accompanying them on the 24th to the presentation of the report about communitarian consultations in the municipal Salon of the Xetzac community. The Centre of Regional and Mesoamerican Investigation (CIRMA) produced this report at the request of the OHCHR. The study demonstrated how the communitarian consultation was done without manipulation and respecting the local indigenous customs. During these activities CIRMA were present, the OHCHR, the Presbyterian Church, the Council of the Peoples of K'iche's (CPK), community members and the Mayor of Cunén.

Background: The Council was established at the first communities' assembly in San Siguán. It consists of 22 directly elected members from eight micro-regions of Cunén. One of the main focuses of the Council's work is the defence of their land and natural resources. In October 2009 they organised a community consultation on mining exploitation and on the construction of hydroelectric plants, among other mega-projects, planned for the Municipality. PBI observed part of the preparation process as well as the consultation itself, in which approximately 19,000 people from 71 communities voted against the aforementioned projects. We began our accompaniment of the Council in February 2010, due to the security risks faced by persons actively promoting the right to land, territory and natural resources in the region.

Guatemalan Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UDEFEGUA).

During our July meetings with UDEFEGUA they analysed the current negative political situation surrounding the extraction of natural resources and the worsening of the perception by the media of civilian security, which is out of step with public perception. UDEFEGUA have been following the cases of San Juan Cotzal, as well as the process in Santa Cruz Barillas following the declared state of siege in may. UDEFEGUA have also been working on a protection Manual for human rights defenders.

Background: The Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UDEFEGUA) was founded in 2004 to promote the security of human rights defenders in Guatemala and helps protect the political space in which they work. The Unit's programmes support threatened human rights defenders and their organisations and advise them about preventing and responding to threats and attacks, through information, training, monitoring and psychological support. UDEFEGUA also lobbies for the protection of human rights defenders by government institutions and the international community. For many years PBI has maintained a close collaborative relationship with UDEFEGUA and in 2007 provided the Unit with international accompaniment during a period of threats. We recommenced our accompaniment following further threats received during May 2009, which the Unit denounced to the Public Prosecutor's Office. Several international organisations have expressed their concerns about what they describe as a "serious pattern of persecution". We intensified the accompaniment again in March 2010 following break-ins to the home and vehicle respectively of Erenia Vanegas and Claudia Samayoa, increasing our visits to UDEFEGUA's office, carrying out periodic meetings with its staff and accompanying them during their movements to the interior of the country during their investigation and verification of reports of attacks against human rights defenders.

Verapaz Union of Campesino Organisations, UVOC.

UVOC has denounced having received threats, with various community members reporting the presence of armed men, in addition to rumours being spread about possible community evictions and possible arrest warrants being issued against community members. Despite being involved in a dialogue table with the State, an eviction was called on October 20th in the community of Cahabón, Alta Verapaz, which was delayed after UVOC's lawyer presented an appeal. The routine monthly Coban land negotiations planned for the 5th of July was subsequently cancelled.

On the 12th of July UVOC, the Highplains Campesino Committee and COPISCO as well as the Cooperative of NGOs organised a press conference to highlight the failure of state to implement enshrined human rights standards during the evictions of Valle del Polochic. We also accompanied UVOC to the Justice of the Peace and the Public Prosecutors Office.

Background: UVOC is a campesino organisation based in the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz and that works principally to defend and promote access to land for the campesino population, as well as advising communities about the legalisation of their lands. UVOC also offers training and support to member communities in the management of development projects. We have accompanied Carlos Morales, leader of the UVOC, since May 2005 because he has been the victim of death threats, intimidation, and persecution by unidentified individuals. We also continue to observe the delicate situation of communities that are part of the organisation that are struggling for access to land.

Human rights lawyer Edgar Pérez Archila.

We intensified our accompaniment mid month of July due to the hearing of the ex-Mayor of Cotzal and five others that took place, all accused of the extrajudicial execution of the Police Officer (PNC) Pedro Rodríguez Toma, as well as other grave crimes, such as torture. This month also saw progress in the Dos Erres massacre case, to which we accompanied Edgar.

Background: In August 2010 we began the accompaniment of lawyer and human rights defender Edgar Pérez Archila in his work defending justice and battling impunity. He works on legal proceedings relating to massacres committed during the internal armed conflict and other cases of past and current human rights violations. We have specifically accompanied him during his work on criminal prosecutions relating to the following: the forced disappearance, torture and extrajudicial

execution of the guerrilla commander Efraín Bámaca Velásquez in 1992; the massacre of the community Las Dos Erres in 1982; the massacre of the community of Río Negro in 1982; and the prosecution for genocide that has been pending before a number of Guatemalan tribunals since 2000.

National Police Historical Archive, AHPN.

During July, on the 5th we witnessed the presentation of the advances of the archive work over the last few years. On the 27th of July we watched the FONGI meeting with the AHP non the advances of the archives work.

Background: The AHPN was discovered by chance in 2005, by staff of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), when they carried out preventative procedures relating to the storage of explosives in Guatemalan public security force buildings. In a building in Zone 6 of the capital (built during the internal armed conflict to house the National Police (PN) hospital, although never used as such), 80 million documents were discovered, abandoned, piled up and poorly conserved. This is the historical-administrative documentation of the PN, from its creation in 1881 to its closure in 1997. The institution's participation in the commission of human rights violations during the internal armed conflict was documented by the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH). In its report "Guatemala: Memory of Silence", CEH affirms that the PN was an operative body for army intelligence, serving as the facade of the G-2, and acted on its orders in the majority of cases. During the CEH investigation, various state bodies, including the Interior Ministry and the PN itself, repeatedly denied the existence of archives or documentary materials that would assist an investigation into human rights violations. Following the first phase of work headed by the PDH to recover the documentation and then create the conditions necessary to allow public access to it, work since 2010 has centred on the institutionalisation of the Archive, the search for political, legal and administrative certainty, the technical stabilisation of the resource and the initiation of procedures to ensure permanent, public access to its contents.

Today the AHPN forms part of the General Archive of Central America, its title and control is the responsibility of the Guatemalan Ministry of Culture, and it functions exclusively on the basis of donations and funds from international cooperation. The Archive is also a member of the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, as the building which houses it was used as a clandestine detention centre by the PN during the armed conflict. Well-known Guatemalan human rights activists participate in the direction, coordination and documentation recovery work, and also promote public access to the information it holds. 150 people work on the tasks of conservation, organisation and archival description. As of 31 March 2011 more than 12 million documents have been digitalised, including more than 19,000 books. To that date they had received 4,503 requests for information, to which they have responded with the provision of 45,020 documents (1,001 to victims' relatives and 1,298 to the Public Prosecutor's Office (98% of these to its Human Rights Office).

2.4 FOLLOW-UP

We regularly receive requests for accompaniment from social organisations and human rights defenders who are being, or who feel threatened. Through international accompaniment, we seek to reduce the threats they receive and to open up a more secure space within which they can carry out their work. Once the level of risk, the threats, and security incidents suffered by the accompanied organisations and individuals have diminished, we continue the accompaniment in the "follow up" phase. This means that we reduce the physical accompaniment but continue to maintain contact with them through visits and/or phone calls to their workplaces and offices. At the same time, we remain available to respond should they have specific requests for international presence.

We currently are providing follow-up accompaniment to the following social organisation:

Camoteca Campesina Association.

During this month we have been in contact with the ACC and have been informed of threats that they have received in the context of their defence of their territory. The ACC also met with other organizations so as to improve security measures in Jocotan in Chiquimula.

Background: The Camoteca Campesina Association was founded in 1988, made up of the then health promoters and midwives of Camotán (Chiquimula). Now the association is an active member of the Coordinator of Popular Indigenous Unions and Eastern Campesinos (COPISCO) Its primary objective is defending life and natural resources and its ultimate aim is well being of the people and the land they live on. It is now made up of 718 associates who monitor whether laws are complied with and follow up violations of human rights in the eastern part of the country. They have a long-term relationship of cooperation and alliance with the 'New Day' Chorti Campesina Central Coordinator, especially with regards to community information about the land, agriculture and protecting the environment. When the association heard of the plans to build hydroelectric plants El Puente, El Orégano and Caparía (see background to the accompaniment of 'New Day' Chorti) and the Technological Corridor project which affected several towns in the department, they started work informing the communities about the effects of these megaprojects on the environment and the economic situation.

PBI has accompanied the association since 2009. Two of its members were detained in November 2010, accused of crimes against internal security and illegal meetings and demonstrations, for participating in a public gathering carried out more than 6 months previously (30 March 2010), in which more than 70 persons demonstrated their opposition to the plans and projects for interconnecting electricity provision in the region. On 2 March we observed the second judicial hearing in Chiquimula in

which the two accused persons were examined. The judge refused to impose a penal sanction and instead imposed a fine of 1,000 Quetzales respectively and prohibited the promotion or participation in illicit demonstration activities.

2.5 OBSERVATION

PBI in Guatemala provides international observation of those public events in which Guatemalan social organisations require it, in order to demonstrate international attention and interest and to be able to communicate what we observe outside the country.



During mid July law students protested against the failure to consult on the reform of the magistrates career. On the 2nd of July we observed the eviction of Rafael Aqueche in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. Outside the building one could see the police, firemen, students and family members of those involved. In the protest were Cynthia del Águila, Minister of Education, who negotiated with the students. Later on came the Home Office Minister, who spoke with the press and the police. The protest was resolved peacefully.

On the 28th of July we accompanied the Assembly of over 200 people of the Council of the People of K'iche's (CPK) in Santa Cruz of Quiché. Two security incidents were reported at the event, despite its largely peaceful nature.

3. PBI-GUATEMALA ACTIVITIES – OUTSIDE GUATEMALA

Regional Representatives, the Project Office Coordinator and other members of the committee and the Project Office and national groups of PBI, conduct public relations campaigns with many NGOs, agencies and national governments, parliamentarians and others. These meetings result in the development and strengthening of the project's "Support Network", an essential tool in the international presence provided by PBI in Guatemala.

4. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In this section we publish several communiqués (some abbreviated) from human rights organisations in which they express their concerns regarding recent events.

10.07.2012 Comunicado Colectivo Ecologista Madre Selva

Mujeres en Resistencia: La lucha por la defensa del territorio y los bienes naturales

El día domingo 1 de julio del año 2012, en la resistencia comunitaria localizada en La Puya San Pedro Ayampuc, se realizó el foro Mujeres en Resistencia -la lucha por la defensa del territorio y los bienes naturales-. Esta actividad fue un intercambio de experiencias entre lideresas de los departamentos de El Quiché, Santa Rosa, San Marcos y las mujeres de la resistencia antiminerera en San Pedro Ayampuc y San José del Golfo del departamento de Guatemala. Las ponentes: Aura Lolita Chávez del Consejo de

Pueblos K'iche', Gregoria Crisanta Pérez y Crisanta Olivia Pérez de la Pastoral de Medio Ambiente de San Miguel Ixtahuacán, Yolanda Girón del Consejo Diocesano para la Defensa de la Naturaleza Codidena y Lesbia Villagrán del Comité Defensor de la Vida de San Rafael las Flores, compartieron sus experiencias con las mujeres y comunidades en La Puya donde están bloqueando la entrada a la mina. Las invitadas compartieron información sobre las acciones pacíficas y estratégicas que han tomado como comunidades para evitar la entrada de proyectos mineros y grandes hidroeléctricas, también compartieron sus experiencias personales sobre la criminalización a las que han sido sometidas por defender su territorio y además, cómo han desarrollado consultas de vecinos o comunitarias para oponerse a grandes proyectos que buscan desarrollarse en su territorio. Esta actividad permitió resaltar varios temas importantes sobre la resistencia de las mujeres:

- Existe un dolor compartido por la forma en que se violan los derechos de los pueblos, en particular a las mujeres, pero también la fuerza extraordinaria de estar juntas. Por lo tanto es necesario crear alianzas entre las mujeres del país que estamos resistiendo y defendiendo el territorio.
- La resistencia pacífica ha sido individual y colectiva y se ha hecho de múltiples maneras. Se han efectuado actividades simbólicas como entregar pilones de café, llevar rosas a las puertas de la mina, caminata de la niñez, caminatas acompañadas de música y poesía elaborada por las comunidades. Esto ha resignificado el sentido de lucha comunitaria y social.
- Las mujeres tenemos decisión y sabemos lo que nos afecta, pero es muy importante que las comunidades apoyen la participación de las mujeres. Las opresiones no vienen sólo de las empresas o del Estado, también vienen de otros ámbitos como el hogar. Además, es importante fortalecer la unidad y organización de las comunidades porque la división es ganancia para otros.

Al finalizar la actividad se recibió una llamada muy emotiva de Yolanda Oqueli saludando a sus compañeras y compañeros de La Puya. Ella expresó su dolor por no poder estar allí en ese momento, pero les animó a seguir adelante en la lucha. Además enfatizó en la necesidad de no dejarse dividir ni manipular por la empresa y seguir unidos en la resistencia pacífica. Como Colectivo Madre Selva, agradecemos el apoyo de las comunidades y organizaciones participantes. Esperamos que este sea uno de muchos encuentros que apoyen el fortalecimiento de la participación política de las mujeres y hombres que defienden la tierra, el agua, la vida.

A principios de 2011 vecinos de San Pedro Ayampuc y San José del Golfo del departamento de Guatemala se dan cuenta que está operando, con licencia de exploración, una empresa minera de oro y plata en su territorio. Se trata del proyecto minero El Tambor que consiste en varias licencias entre unas la de Progreso VII Derivada, propiedad de la empresa canadiense Radius Gold Inc. Este proyecto fue autorizado sin consulta previa a la población de ambos municipios. En el mes de marzo del presente año, los pobladores deciden bloquear la entrada a la mina y se instala el campamento La Puya donde los vecinos se turnan las 24 horas para evitar el ingreso de la maquinaria al proyecto. El 8 de mayo a la una de la mañana la empresa intenta ingresar, aproximadamente, 25 camiones con maquinaria custodiados por 40 patrullas de la Policía Nacional Civil. Los vecinos se organizan y llegan 2000 personas de las aldeas aledañas al lugar para impedir el ingreso de la empresa. A pesar de la provocación por parte de la empresa y la PNC, y gracias a la actitud pacífica de la población, no se incurre en violencia.

El 13 de junio sufre un atentado contra su vida la destacada lideresa Yolanda Oqueli de San José del Golfo quien se encuentra estable pero sin poder regresar por ahora a su comunidad. La resistencia comunitaria y pacífica ya tiene más de cuatro meses en el lugar y la lucha sigue en pie a pesar de las amenazas e intimidaciones. Cuatro días después de esta actividad, una de las ponentes, Lolita Chávez, junto con otros miembros del Consejo de Pueblos K'iche', sufrieron un atentado contra su vida. El hecho ocurrió después de realizar una manifestación pacífica en la comunidad Xetnap quinta La Laguna en la que expresaron su desacuerdo con el alcalde de Santa Cruz del Quiché, quien apoya la instalación de torres de transmisión eléctrica de la empresa ENEL sin consulta previa a la población. Lamentamos y repudiamos este hecho y exigimos el esclarecimiento de este delito contra la vida de las lideresas quienes están luchando por la defensa de su territorio.

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