



PEACE BRIGADES  
INTERNATIONAL  
MEXICO PROJECT

making space for peace



# Annual Report 2014

PBI Mexico, March 2015



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## PBI Mexico donors in 2014

- Amnesty International – Swedish Amnesty Fund (Sweden)
- Basilian Human Development Fund (Canada)
- Bistum St. Gallen (Switzerland)
- Bread for the World /Brot für Welt (Germany)
- British Embassy in Mexico (Foreign and Commonwealth Office)
- Canadian Auto Workers (Canada)
- Canadian Embassy in Mexico – Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (FCIL)
- Catalan Development and Cooperation Agency (Spain)
- CEP / UNIFOR (Canada)
- Civil Peace Service (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
- Finish Embassy in Mexico
- Institute of International Affairs (ifa), Zivik Programme (Civil Conflict Resolution) (German Federal Foreign Office)
- Kriens hilft Menschen in Not (Switzerland)
- Lawyers Bar Association of Paris (France)
- MacArthur Foundation (United States)
- Misereor (Germany)
- National Groups of PBI (France, Switzerland)
- Overbrook Foundation (United States)
- Protestant Church Saint Gallen – Tablat (Switzerland)
- Santander Municipality (Spain)
- Sigrid Rausing Trust (United Kingdom)
- Swiss Embassy in Mexico
- Valdesian Church (Campaign 8 per thousand) (Italy)
- Valladolid Municipality (Spain)
- Valladolid Provincial Council (Spain)



Northern team volunteers accompany Pasta de Conchos Family Organization to a memorial for the mining disaster in the Pit 3 of BINSa © PBI Mexico

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## “Expanding and adjusting support tools”

Sadly, Ayotzinapa is key to any overview of the year 2014 in Mexico. PBI observed the strong mobilisation of Mexican civil society and the great solidarity in response to the serious violations committed in the case of Ayotzinapa, but it also witnessed the exhaustion and the psychosocial effects derived from the current context of violence, terror and impunity. With the occurrences of Ayotzinapa and the subsequent repression against many protestors, we have been witness to an increasingly acute human rights situation. Ayotzinapa is an emblematic case which, far from being an isolated one, is evidence of the magnitude and the seriousness of the crisis of human rights, insecurity and endemic impunity which afflicts Mexico.

In regard to PBI, 2014 was a year of great importance for its internal processes, not only for the Mexico Project but for Peace Brigades International as a whole: as happens every three years, the PBI General Assembly was celebrated. This assembly is the highest decision-making body within PBI, and in preparation, the PBI field projects evaluated the work completed and its fulfilment of the three-yearly strategic plans. PBI Mexico was thus subject to an external evaluation which noted, both the completion of the strategic plan 2011-2014, and that “the great diversity of activities has allowed PBI to increase its impact and achieve greater influence”, referring to the expansion of activities in advocacy, communications, facilitating dialogue between key actors, and training for human rights defenders (HRDs). At the same time, the external evaluation identified the Project’s need to increase its capacity to respond with greater flexibility and to strengthen the field teams, considering that it is the permanent physical presence in the field which differentiates PBI from many other international NGOs which defend human rights.

During the assembly, the Mexico Project’s new three-year strategic plan (2015-2017) was approved. This will continue the development of recent years and also places special emphasis on the objective of increasing flexibility, both to better support HRDs in the states we already work in, and also to increase its ability to support HRDs in other Mexican states. As a first step, PBI will increase the number of volunteers in the teams in 2015 and ho-



Human Rights Defenders and Diplomatic Corps take part in the first anniversary of PBI’s Northern Team in Ciudad Chihuahua © PBI Mexico

pes to be able to increase its coverage of more states through 2017.

In the serious situation currently experienced across Mexico, we believe that proximity to at-risk human rights defenders is fundamental, especially because the progress and achievements of PBI’s accompanied organisations – as in the “car bomb” case in Paso del Norte described on page 5 – make all the difference in establishing ground-breaking advances.

With this idea in mind, we will continue to expand and adjust our support tools for HRDs. We are therefore particularly happy to have completed a guide for the facilitation of security and protection workshops, the results of an intense process with men and women HRDs in Mexico. The facilitation guide will serve in the coming years both to transmit skills to new PBI team members as well as to other HRDs who are interested in training human rights defenders and/or in matters of security and protection.

*“The government won’t allow an attack against the Father [Alejandro Solalinde], not because it sympathises with him, with the Shelter or with the migrants, but because it doesn’t want an international scandal. I think that PBI’s accompaniment has worked quite a lot, and because of it we are alive. If they wanted to kill us,*

*they would have already done it. But they don’t, because the political cost would be very high.”* Alberto Donis (‘Hermanos en el Camino’ Migrant Shelter)

Finally, although the fundraising situation continues to be challenging, the Mexico Project could, from early on in 2014, guarantee the funds necessary to execute all planned activities. To maintain the struggle and support Mexican human rights defenders, we hope to count on the political and financial support of our donors and our support network, and we hope that reading this Annual Report is motivation for maintaining and/or increasing support for our work in 2015 and beyond.

Your support is of vital importance to our Project!



## Ayotzinapa puts an end to the “Mexican moment”

During 2014, the Mexican government demonstrated a clear preoccupation for changing Mexico’s international image. The Second Government Report, launched in September, made an effort to present Mexico as a safe country which respects human rights. Other Mexican and international bodies and some foreign press supported the message, promoting investment in Mexico and highlighting the opportunities created by the government’s strategic reforms to liberalise different economic sectors. It was “Mexico’s moment”<sup>1</sup>.

Civil society, however, expressed its concern for a security strategy which, in its judgement, seemed to differ very little in its execution from that of Felipe Calderón. At the same time, the strategic reforms were approved in a climate of social tension and popular discontent. Several organisations expressed their concern for the impact of the energy reform, and denounced the fact that it doesn’t include clear human rights obligations. This could lead to an increase in land conflicts and, consequently, to violence against community human rights defenders (HRDs). Other organisations reported that some articles in the telecommunications reform could potentially permit censorship. These criticisms were offered in an increasingly difficult environment for social protest. The Front for Freedom of Expression and Social Protest (Frente por la Libertad de Expresión y la Protesta Social), formed in early 2014, documented how laws and regulations were approved which tended to restrict freedom of expression and protest, combined with a climate of police abuse of force during marches and acts of protest, as well as arbitrary detentions of protesters and HRDs<sup>2</sup>.

This context had an impact on the security situation for Mexican HRDs. According to a report presented by three social organisations, between January 2011 and May 2014, attacks on HRDs doubled and arbitrary detentions of activists rose from 292 in 2012 to 427 in 2013<sup>3</sup>. The report also highlights that by comparing the first 18 months of the Calderon administration with those of Peña Nieto’s, enforced disappearance against HRDs increased around 60%. In November, at the request of PBI and other human rights organisations, five independent experts formed a Civil Observation Mission for a visit to Mexico. After meeting with civil society

and authorities from the three levels of government in the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Baja California and in Mexico City, the experts confirmed that the experience of human rights defenders in Mexico continues to be shadowed by criminalisation, impunity and a lack of recognition<sup>4</sup>.

Despite this worrying panorama described by Mexican HRDs and human rights organisations, Mexico’s good image abroad, spotlighting its economic reforms, was maintained. This radically changed in



Relatives of disappeared persons during the Mother’s Day Protest in Mexico City © PBI México

autumn, when two paradigmatic cases of grave human rights violations were brought to media attention. In September, a foreign magazine<sup>5</sup> revealed the alleged participation of soldiers in the execution of 22 people in a warehouse in Tlatlaya, Mexico state – subsequently confirmed by the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH)<sup>6</sup>. In the second, on 26 September, three teaching students from Ayotzinapa were murdered and another 43 forcibly disappeared by municipal police, in collusion with organised crime in Iguala, Guerrero. At the same time, the Federal Attorney General’s Office (PGR) officially recognised that 22,322 people are “non

localised” in Mexico: Ayotzinapa was not an isolated case in Mexico.

With the media coverage that surrounded these two cases, Mexico’s human rights crisis was again squarely in the gaze of the international community. The Mexican government swiftly became the target of international scrutiny, soon followed by condemnation of the country’s reigning corruption and impunity. Both in Mexico and around the world, millions of people reacted in protest. According to the cam-

ses documented by the Cerezo Committee, some of the protests in Mexico were faced with excessive use of force and arbitrary detentions. Throughout the final months of 2014, following corruption scandals and revelations of inadequacies in the Ayotzinapa investigations, the wave of opposition against the Peña Nieto administration has grown stronger<sup>7</sup>.

PBI considers the current situation extremely worrying, and it will continue to monitor how its evolution affects the security situation for Mexican human rights defenders.

1 As it was dubbed by The Economist in “Mexico’s moment”, 21/11/2012, at .

2 Frente por la Libertad de Expresión y la Protesta Social, “Control del espacio público: Informe sobre retrocesos en las libertades de expresión y reunión en el actual gobierno”, April 2014. <http://econ.st/1KaZx7z>

3 ACUDDEH, Campaña Nacional Contra la Desaparición Forzada y Comité? Cerezo México, La defensa de los derechos humanos en México: una lucha contra la impunidad (junio de 2013 a mayo 2014), 2014.

4 See: [bit.ly/1uRtReJ](http://bit.ly/1uRtReJ).

5 “Tlatlaya, primera gran masacre del gobierno de EPN, según HRW, se vuelve tema mundial”, Sin Embargo, 19/09/2014.

6 “La CNDH ve 15 ejecuciones en Tlatlaya y emite recomendación a autoridades”, CNN México, 21/10/2014.

7 One of the most controversial moments was the publication of the report by the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team (EAAF), which cast doubt on the conclusions offered by the PGR. See: “Peritos argentinos ponen en duda la “verdad histórica” de la PGR sobre Ayotzinapa”, Aristégui Noticias, 7/02/2015.

## “PBI opens another perspective”: Accompaniment of Paso del Norte HRC



Members of Paso del Norte HRC during an advocacy workshop delivered by PBI, Ciudad Juárez © PBI Mexico

In September 2013, PBI signed its first accompaniment agreement in Mexico’s North, with Paso Del Norte Human Rights Centre (Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte). Based in Ciudad Juárez, the Centre dedicates its work to the defence of victims of torture and disappearance<sup>8</sup>. In 2011, the organisation was subjected to an illegal office raid by members of the Federal Police and, on other occasions, Centre staff members were the targets of harassment, threats and surveillance by federal and state authorities. Throughout 2014, PBI’s accompaniment was focused on offering greater security and legitimacy to the Paso del Norte HRC, through meetings with authorities, workshops on security and advocacy, publications, strengthening support networks and physical accompaniment. The results of the year are quite positive, as there has been a considerable reduction in security incidents against the Centre’s members.

“At the times of greatest tension in the cases we run, we felt calmer because we had PBI’s accompaniment mechanism, which can pull strings to increase security”, said one Paso del Norte HRC member. The Centre also considers that PBI’s presence and actions have provided

greater security, both on a collective and an individual level. “This is due to PBI’s dialogue with authorities, which in some sense ‘inhibits’ the authorities, favouring the Centre’s security. On the other hand, PBI’s workshops have served to improve our personal and electronic security.” Furthermore, the Centre’s clients also incorporated protective measures which they learnt from Paso del Norte HRC, in training sessions which replicated PBI’s security workshops. In this way, PBI’s training ensures a significant multiplying effect for a collective protection system. “This feeling of greater security is also due to the role which PBI has had in regard to the Protection Mechanism [the Mechanism to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Mexico]: the progress we’ve seen is related to the interest PBI has shown and the dialogues it has held in Mexico City”. Through its presence as an observer in the revision meetings for the protection measures of Paso del Norte HRC and its federal-level dialogue with the Unit for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights of the Interior Ministry (Unidad para la Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de

la Secretaría de Gobernación, SEGOB), PBI has clearly noted that, despite the ongoing challenges<sup>9</sup>, in the final months of 2014 important progress was made in the implementation of the organisation’s protection measures.

The Director of Paso del Norte HRC, Father Oscar Enríquez, also considers that the increase in the organisation’s international profile is, in part, due to PBI actions: “I feel that the Centre has become a reference point for international bodies – in regard to research and reporting – and this owes a lot to PBI’s accompaniment. PBI opens another perspective.” He added that “the cases for the release of torture victims were publicised by Amnesty International, ACAT-France, the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA), the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT) and PBI, and this created an international echo. The international tours have also greatly helped to increase our international profile, as did PBI’s exposure and dissemination of our work with civil society actors and international bodies”.

8 For more information on the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Centre, see: <http://bit.ly/1wNk6MZ>.

9 In regards to PBI’s position on the implementation of the Mechanism to Protect Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Mexico, see its joint memo: <http://bit.ly/18rY774>.



## One year after opening: First advances in the North

To give greater visibility to the issues of torture and disappearance in Mexico's North, PBI invited Silvia Méndez, a member of the Centre, on a European tour. The human rights defender travelled to four European countries in November – the Netherlands, Belgium, France and Germany – where she participated in 10 public events and held 27 meetings with representatives of Foreign Affairs Ministries, parliaments, lawyers' groups, NGOs, European Union institutions and United Nations mechanisms. "It was an experience of great personal growth," highlights Silvia. "It gave me the oppor-

Without a doubt, 2014 was a year of many legal and strategic achievements for Paso del Norte HRC, and PBI is undeniably proud to have accompanied the organisation on this path. In March, five youths accused of leaving a car-bomb in the centre of Ciudad Juárez in 2010 were released after three and half years in detention<sup>10</sup>. Paso del Norte HRC, after a process of dialogue with Federal Attorney General's Office (PGR), reached a compromised with Attorney General Murillo Karam for the release of the detainees provided that torture were proven according to the Istanbul Protocol.

Figuroa Case<sup>11</sup>, were absolved after spending two years and five months in prison. It was determined that they had been accused based on testimonies obtained through torture. The Paso del Norte HRC members point out that thanks to PBI, they have been discovering dialogue with authorities and the positive impact this can have: "the decision to seek dialogue with Attorney General Murillo Karam was based on what we did with PBI in an advocacy workshop, and we believe that it turned out very well: the youths were freed. We designed our strategy around what we did in the workshop, and when we thought about advocacy we always returned to the tools passed on by PBI." It is, in fact, a strategy they hope to continue with to see results for their cases of enforced disappearance in 2015.

For her part, Patricia Galarza, coordinator of Paso del Norte HRC's psychosocial area, highlights that PBI's accompaniment is something which is always mentioned to the victims and relatives they work with: "we tell them that PBI accompanies us, but also accompanies them, and that makes them feel safe". She adds that "often victims are concerned for us, because they see that

we are taking a risk in working with them, but we tell them 'we don't feel alone', because organisations like PBI are there".

"We felt very supported by PBI when the five youths in the 'Car-Bomb Case' were released, for the exposure which PBI brought to their release, which also acted to halt the defamation against the Centre," stated Diana Morales, coordinator of the Centre's legal department. In June, not long before the Centre opened its new offices, Misael Sánchez Fausto and the brothers Juan Antonio and Jesús Figuroa Gómez, charged with the crime of aggravated extortion in the so-called

<sup>10</sup> For more information on the case, see: <http://bit.ly/1BfuH7U>.  
<sup>11</sup> More information at <http://bit.ly/1FtsIMK>.

"PBI's accompaniment is important because the authorities see that there is an international organisation behind us, ensuring that nothing happens to us. The improved behaviour of the Coahuila authorities is in part due to the international presence, which forces them to treat us better – although that doesn't necessarily mean in-depth attention to the issues presented." Alma García (DCHR Fray Juan de Larios)

The office of PBI's Northern Team was officially opened on 1 October 2013, and in its first full year has provided considerable support to human rights defenders. During 2014, PBI strengthened HRDs' capacities to protect themselves, by delivering security workshops to Paso del Norte Human Rights Centre (Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte) and the Saltillo Migrant House (Casa del Migrante de Saltillo), and advocacy workshops to Paso del Norte HRC and to the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre (Centro de Derechos Humanos Juan Gerardi). In the same vein, PBI invited the Cerezo Committee to deliver workshops on documentation processes in Torreón and Ciudad Juárez, in which various HRDs participated.

PBI also focused on expanding the support networks of its accompanied organisations. It organised a meeting between the US Embassy in Mexico and Juan Gerardi HRC, the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights (Centro Diocesano para los Derechos Humanos Fray Juan de Larios), the Centre for the Human Rights of Women (CEDEHM) and United Forces for Our Disappeared in Mexico (FUNDEM), facilitated contacts between Chihuahuan HRDs and the US Consulate in Ciudad Juárez, and invited Silvia Méndez from Paso del Norte HRC on a European tour.

PBI celebrated one year of operations in Chihuahua and Coahuila on 6 November 2014 with an event in Chihuahua City<sup>12</sup>. Human rights defenders from both states held a direct dialogue with representative of five European embassies. They highlighted the grave security situation they are subject to in Chihuahua, particularly in the Sierra Tarahumara, as well as the lack of dialogue between civil society and the government. They spoke of the ongoing dangerous struggle to locate the thousands of disappeared people in Coahuila, as well as the difficulty of en-



Northern Team volunteer with young migrants in the surroundings of Saltillo Migrant House © PBI Mexico

suring migrants' rights in a context of defamation and threats. One of the results of this event was a meeting between the Governor of Coahuila and embassy representatives<sup>13</sup>.

Four of the five organisations accompanied by PBI in Chihuahua and Coahuila have been assigned with protection measures, which reflects a worrying security situation. As a result, PBI monitors the implementation of these measures through advocacy work with responsible authorities and through accompaniment to the recipient organisations during the revision dialogues. During 2014, PBI assisted in the effective implementation of most of the measures granted to Paso del Norte HRC, advances in the compliance with measures for the Saltillo Migrant House, and the granting of protection measures to Juan Gerardi HRC in July 2014, after a wait of almost one year.

As part of an advocacy campaign in August for the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, the Northern Team accompanied Juan Gerardi HRC, DCHR Fray Juan de Larios - and, by extension, United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC) – to the State Forum on the Declaration of Absence by Forced Disappearance<sup>14</sup>. It also accompanied them to an audience with the Governor of Coahuila and other federal and state authorities, as well as to a march to demand the safe return of the disappeared. As

part of its accompaniment, PBI monitors the investigations and searches in Coahuila. In this regard, Jorge Verástegui from DCHR Fray Juan de Larios commented that, "it is an important deterrent that we have PBI's accompaniment. In the North [of Mexico], we live in a situation which has little media coverage, so we feel more recognised knowing that they are always standing by." He adds, "we have increased our number of international contacts. In addition, the UN Committee on [Enforced] Disappearances knows about our work, they invited us to meetings, they identified us as an important organisation on this subject."

It is complex to evaluate, but doubtless one of the most important aspects of PBI's work lies in ensuring that human rights defenders feel safer. In this sense, members of Paso del Norte HRC, Juan Gerardi HRC, DCHR Fray Juan de Larios and the Saltillo Migrant House told us they feel safer thanks to PBI's accompaniment. In the same way, and as an example, Juan Gerardi HRC opened a new day centre for migrants in Torreón and Paso del Norte HRC moved to a larger office and hired more staff, signs of progress that allow both organisations to expand their work spheres and thus have a greater impact. PBI is very pleased to report that none of the organisations it accompanies in Mexico's North have experienced any serious security incidents during its first year of operations.

<sup>12</sup> See PBI's article about it at: <http://bit.ly/1MzUGJb>.

<sup>13</sup> "Se reúne el Gobernador con Embajadores de Europa", El Heraldo de Saltillo, 11/02/2015.

<sup>14</sup> See: "Alto Comisionado aplaude la Ley de Declaración de Ausencia de Coahuila", Vanguardia, 30/08/2014.



## PBI activation in response to Codigo-DH's worsening security situation



Sara Mendez from Codigo DH during her tour through Spain in a meeting with the Municipality of Valladolid © PBI Spain

The year 2014 – just like 2013 – was marked by a concerning fact: Oaxaca continues to be one of the most dangerous Mexican states for human rights defenders<sup>15</sup>. In this regard, this last year has shown a particularly risky context for community HRDs who work to defend the right to land and territory, and for those who accompany them in that defence.

On 8 July, staff of the Committee for the Integral Defence for Human Rights “Gobixha” (Codigo-DH) received threats via a phone call to the office, for accompanying legal processes on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca. Minutes later, they received a second call which threatened individuals linked to the Juchitan Popular People’s Assembly (Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Juchitán, APPJ), which is accompanied by Codigo-DH. Similar incidents recurred in the following months. PBI sees these repeated acts of aggression as a clear intention to narrow Codigo-DH’s work sphere, especially in their legal cases of attacks against community HRDs of the APPJ who are opposed to the establishment of wind-farm projects on the Isthmus<sup>16</sup>.

As a response to this generalised lack of security for HRDs, and, in particular, these security incidents against Codigo-DH, PBI’s Mexico Project activated its support network. This consisted in activating the alert and early-response system, with the

aim of contributing to stopping the pressures suffered by Codigo-DH members and those they accompany, and thus combined PBI’s different work areas, namely dialogue with political actors, strengthening support networks, physical accompaniment and dissemination of information.

As part of its reaction strategy, PBI invited Sara Méndez, anthropologist and director of Codigo-DH, to conduct a European tour in the month of October 2014. As a result, Sara met with social and academic organisations, lawyers’ networks, the media, political parties and government bodies.

In this regard, Sara commented that *“gaining exposure for the organisation and its work allows us to strengthen the security of the organisation and those who work in it. This tour was of particular importance as the visit was made to Spain, the main financier of the wind-farm projects in Mexico and the community process for which we received the recent threats. In this regard, it strengthens our work. Our network of contacts was expanded, both in terms of civil solidarity groups and the Spanish government.”*

15 ACUDEH, Campaña Nacional Contra la Desaparición Forzada y Comité Cerezo México, “Defender los derechos humanos en México: el costo de la dignidad: junio de 2012 a mayo de 2013”, 2013; ACUDEH, Campaña Nacional Contra la Desaparición Forzada y Comité Cerezo México, “La defensa de los derechos humanos en México: una lucha contra la impunidad (junio de 2013 a mayo 2014)”, 2014.

16 For information on the threats to Codigo-DH, see <http://bit.ly/1ErK9jG>.

of Codigo-DH’s members and requesting an investigation into the case. Later, in October, Codigo-DH was explicitly invited to a meeting called by the German Embassy to Mexico where the dialogue with the German Adjunct Minister and the Ambassador focused on Mexico’s human rights situation. As part of a wave of support which had the participation of both national and international organisations, WOLA also sent letters to the Governor of Oaxaca and Mexico’s Minister of the Interior, and on its part, the Robert F. Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights wrote to the commissioners of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), including PBI’s briefing on wind-farm projects in the Isthmus as an attachment.

*“PBI’s accompaniment has been very useful to us, especially in terms of exposure, which has been fundamental in difficult moments to reduce the risk in the Isthmus.”* Alba Cruz (Codigo-DH)

In the light of this coordinated response, the diplomatic corps and international community proved themselves, once more, attentive to the situation and gave a very positive response. During a visit to Mexico in July to deal with economic matters, the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, Frank-Walter Steinmeier, included Codigo-DH’s case on his agenda. In addition, German parliamentarian Peter Meiwald sent a letter to Mexico’s Minister of the Interior, Osorio Chong, and the Governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cué Monteagudo, expressing his concern for the security situation

## PBI observes consultation process in Oaxaca

Thanks to its ongoing presence in Mexico, PBI has observed that the execution of large-scale projects without the opportunity for prior consultation tends to lead to social conflicts and, as a consequence, to generate greater risk for the men and women human rights defenders who promote the defence of land and territory. At the same time, both in its dialogue with authorities and in its publications<sup>17</sup>, PBI has repeatedly highlighted the importance of creating spaces for consultation which comply with international standards and which include the meaningful participation of HRDs.

For this reason, when a consultation process<sup>18</sup> was opened in November on the construction and operation of a new wind farm in Juchitán de Zaragoza, the largest municipality in Oaxaca’s Isthmus of Tehuantepec, PBI praised the initiative and also registered formally as an international observer. As such, and in accordance with its mandate and its principles of non-violence, non-interference and non-partisanship, PBI’s team in Oaxaca have attended the consultation’s sessions in Juchitán with the aim of understanding the process and its eventual impacts on the security situation of local HRDs. With its presence, PBI also seeks to make apparent the international interest that the Juchitán consultation has aroused and to avoid attacks and acts of aggression against the HRDs involved.

On that matter, lawyer Alba Cruz of Codigo-DH mentioned that *“PBI’s presence in the Isthmus is of the greatest importance to maintain continuity on the issue and to show international presence in a context which is becoming more intense.”*

At the same time, the organisations ProDESC, Poder and Codigo-DH formed an “Observation Mission” and presented a report on the first week of the consultation<sup>19</sup>, which underlines flaws in proceedings regarding the lack of adequate translation and interpretation into the participants’ indigenous languages; situations where differing information has been provided to different participants; the lack of clear mechanisms for making agreements; and the lack of moderator impartiality.

The document, published in November, also highlights security incidents against



Oaxaca team volunteer observing the popular consultation process in Juchitan de Zaragoza, Oaxaca © PBI Mexico

members of the Public Assembly of the People of Juchitán (APPJ), the Assembly of Indigenous People of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Defence of Land and Territory (APIITDIT) and the Technical Assessment Committee of the consultation<sup>20</sup>. In December, after further security incidents, Amnesty International released an urgent action expressing its concern for the new threats against the community. Similarly, and through its accompaniment to the organisation Codigo-DH, PBI has noted throughout 2014 an increasing climate of tension, with harassment and threats against community HRDs, particu-

larly against members of the APPJ – accompanied by Codigo-DH<sup>21</sup>.

During 2015, PBI will follow the next sessions of the consultation in accordance with its role as an international observer. PBI recognises the importance of this process, noting at the same time that – provided it complies with due process – it has the potential to act as a precedent for the development of future consultation spaces in Mexico which are in agreement with international human rights norms.

17 During the year, PBI published a briefing on the wind farms in Oaxaca, in which it highlighted concerns over human rights violations in the state; available at: <http://bit.ly/1BJH3FV>.

18 The Ministry of Energy (SENER) has made the process’s documentation available (in Spanish): <http://bit.ly/ConsultaSENER>.

19 Available (in Spanish) at: [bit.ly/ReporteConsulta1](http://bit.ly/ReporteConsulta1).

20 See, for example, “Agresiones contra Defensores en la Consulta de Juchitán”, Red TdT, 12/11/2014.

21 During 2014, Codigo-DH insisted on the security needs of the APPJ. Their communiqués can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1KF2Moj> and <http://bit.ly/1MgHOYi>.



# Opening spaces for Mexican Civil Society



Civil Society Organizations and United States Embassy representatives tackle the issue of enforced disappearances during a meeting facilitated by PBI in Mexico City © PBI Mexico

During 2014, PBI's advocacy work focused on opening spaces for dialogue and communication between civil society and Mexican authorities, the diplomatic corps and the international community, with the aim of guaranteeing the physical and psychological integrity of Mexican human rights defenders. PBI's efforts have concentrated particularly on three thematic areas: (1) Business and Human Rights; (2) Security, Justice and Impunity; and (3) Implementing Protection Measures.

## Business and Human Rights

PBI considers that the community defenders who struggle for their rights to land and territory have a very high level of risk, and, as a result, PBI has promoted a range of initiatives to highlight their situation and ways of dealing with it. Throughout the year, PBI has pushed for a series of gatherings between civil society and the diplomatic corps to start a dialogue on the implementation of the United Nations UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights in Mexico. For the first time, a meeting was held between representatives of the Mexican government, the diplomatic corps, the private sector and civil society, with the aim of opening a dialogue on the Principles' implementation. PBI contributed to the inclusion, also for the first time, of the issue of business and human rights in the High-Level Dialogue on Human Rights between the EU and

Mexico. The dialogue was conducted in March 2014 and was preceded by a seminar in which civil society organisations from Mexico and Europe participated and provided information for the analysis of the situation in both regions.

With its March briefing<sup>22</sup>, PBI sought to highlight the situation for HRDs who defend the right to land and territory in the context of wind-farm construction on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, Oaxaca. PBI considers that the conditions and the security situation detailed in its publication are a paradigm for other similar contexts in which rural and indigenous communities defending their right to land and territory are at risk. After several years of PBI advocacy on the need to hold consultation processes that guarantee free, prior and informed consent, in accordance with international standards, a consultation process was launched in November in Juchitán de Zaragoza, Oaxaca, which PBI attended in its formal capacity as observer. PBI welcomes this initiative, yet cannot fail to express its concern for the security situation of the HRDs involved in it.

On the same issue, three organisations accompanied by PBI (Educa, Código-DH and Tlachinollan) participated in advocacy tours in Europe and the US, where they

met with a range of actors from both civil society and the political sphere, to highlight the risks for HRDs who defend human rights in contexts where megaprojects are implemented in Mexico.

*"Educa was able to put its position to civil, political and governmental actors in regard to the rights of indigenous peoples and megaprojects, in addition to emphasising the issue before the next tour of Euro-MPs to Mexico. I believe the contacts made are very useful [and] it helped me understand better the dynamic of the European Union."* Marcos Leyva (Educa) on his tour to Brussels in May 2014

## Security, Justice and Impunity

Two years after the return of the Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) to Mexico's presidency, Mexican civil society has denounced the lack of real change in the nation's public security policies. They report that, despite the official discourse announcing a new security strategy under the motto "Mexico at Peace", no real change has been observed. At the request of civil society to highlight this worrying situation, PBI conducted a series of activities.

As part of the International Day of the Victims of Enforced Disappearances, PBI organised a social media campaign to expose the scale of this issue in Mexico, noting the highest traffic to date on its Facebook and Twitter accounts<sup>23</sup>. In the same vein, PBI facilitated a meeting on the issue between members of the DCHR Fray Juan de Larios, United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC), the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center, the Centre for the Human Rights of Women (CEDEHM), and the US embassy.

Throughout 2014, PBI conducted an investigation on this issue, based on interviews with members of civil society, our field observations, and the collection and analysis of relevant documentation. This culminated in the presentation of the Bulletin entitled "Peace in Mexico?" Security Strategies and Human Rights<sup>24</sup>, which broadcasts the voices of different HRDs as they share their experiences of defending human rights today. For the launch

itself, PBI brought nine organisations from four states and Mexico City together with representatives of eight embassies for dialogue on the situation.

*"This Bulletin is very important as it reveals what is really happening. Without a doubt, PBI is an ally of our work and we are in harmony in our defences of human rights. By passing to the international community what we learn from the people, which is what is really happening, it means taking a firm stand on the reality of those who go out to work every day, and who constantly experience human rights violations."* Antonio Esparza (Juan Gerardi HRC)

In addition, PBI organised an advocacy tour to various countries in Europe for the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Centre, based in Ciudad Juarez, to let them speak of their own experiences as human rights defenders.

## Implementing Protection Measures

The implementation of adequate protection measures for HRDs continues to be a key topic of PBI's advocacy, and, combined with the work of observing the meetings for measures' revision and implementation and the ongoing meetings on this issue held by the PBI teams in their states, a series of activities was realised to continue pressing this issue.

PBI started 2014 lobbying for the acceptance of the recommendations handed down to Mexico in December 2013 as part of the UN's second Universal Periodic Review<sup>25</sup>. Through meetings, publications, a joint letter and a related event, PBI also continued urging the Mexican government to consult HRDs and human rights organisations in implementing these recommendations. These actions contributed to Mexico accepting all the recommendations related to the security situation for HRDs, and the majority of other recommendations. Subsequently, PBI has observed the meetings of civil society organisations with the government to define a mechanism to effectively implement the recommendations.

In February 2014, PBI presented its conclusions on the achievements and the challenges of implementing the European

Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders in a gathering of representatives from at least 80 EU delegations. Along the same line, PBI, together with other European civil society organisations, organised an event in Brussels to commemorate the Guidelines' 10 year anniversary. As a result, the EU Council published conclusions in which it renews its commitment to the Guidelines' implementation. The Brussels event was repeated in Mexico in December 2014, where a working meeting was held between Mexican civil society and the diplomatic corps to discuss good practices and challenges in applying the Guidelines in Mexico. A public event was also held in which the Interior Ministry and the Foreign Affairs Ministry participated, and where they publicly recognised the important and valuable work conducted by human rights defenders. PBI continually advocates that this type of recognition be made.

*"One of PBI's first tasks was successfully getting the Coahuila government to make a public pronouncement of full support for our work. In 2014, at a public event at the invitation of the [state] executive itself, the government recognised the House's work in defence of human rights."* Alberto Xicoténcatl (Saltillo Migrant House)

In March 2014, the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (Mecanismo de Protección para Defensores de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas) lost one third of its staff, including the coordinator, and the delay in analysing cases became more acute. PBI alerted its support network with an open letter, written together with other international organisations and directed to the Mexican authorities and the international community. As a result, two Euro-MPs expressed their concern through a parliamentary question, and four German parliamentarians sent letters to the Mexican authorities. Other international NGOs also sent letters and published communiqués. Following its April meeting, the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee urged



Celebration of the tenth anniversary of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders, Mexico City © PBI Mexico

the Mexican government in its communiqué to continue directing its efforts to the Mechanism's effective implementation. Between May and November 2014, the most delayed cases were dealt with. To monitor this progress and to identify the points which yet require improvement, PBI and WOLA published a report<sup>26</sup> on the current situation of the Mechanism. It was based on the documentation of several concrete examples where the Mechanism's action has been insufficient to guarantee the protection of at-risk HRDs. Following advocacy by PBI, an improved implementation of the measures granted has been achieved in some concrete cases PBI accompanies.

In November, PBI co-ordinated an International Civil Observation Mission with various Mexican and international organisations. Five independent experts travelled to Mexico to observe the situation faced by human rights defenders. They visited Guerrero, Oaxaca, Baja California and Mexico City and met with civil society members, as well as federal, state and municipal authorities and the diplomatic corps. The publication of the mission's conclusions and observations is planned for May 2015<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>22</sup> Available at: <http://bit.ly/1BJH3FV>.

<sup>23</sup> PBI's article is available at: <http://bit.ly/1A7DUep>.

<sup>24</sup> Available at: [bit.ly/SecurityandHRs](http://bit.ly/SecurityandHRs).

<sup>25</sup> A table (in Spanish) comparing the recommendations made to Mexico in the 2013 UPR and the State's responses can be found at: [http://bit.ly/1MDHD\\_EPU](http://bit.ly/1MDHD_EPU).

<sup>26</sup> Available at: <http://bit.ly/1A27Tne>.

<sup>27</sup> The preliminary conclusions are available at: <http://bit.ly/1weYUnc>.



## Alert for Ayotzinapa: PBI supports and reinforces the actions of Tlachinollan

Following up on the events in Iguala has been of especial importance for PBI because of the 12 years the Project was permanently present in Guerrero and the 10 years it has been accompanying “Tlachinollan” Human Rights Centre (Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña “Tlachinollan”). On this occasion, PBI’s role has been to reinforce and support the initiatives led by Tlachinollan and the other organisations which are accompanying the victims’ families and the survivors, with the aim of increasing the strength of the responses made by relevant actors both within Mexico and at an international level.

how the students left the scene. The following day, the brutally tortured body of one male student was found in the street.

In total, three students were killed, several wounded and 43 forcibly disappeared. The case launched a broad-based national and international social movement, in solidarity with the relatives of the disappeared and in repudiation of the impunity and the collusion between Mexican authorities and organised crime. Ayotzinapa, far from being an isolated case, confirmed the serious human rights crisis in which Mexico has been submerged since the Calderon administration.

have been leaked to the press. The relatives also report having suffered attacks and harassment by various police corps<sup>29</sup>.

In view of the case’s magnitude and gravity, and the clear increase in risk which it implied for Tlachinollan, the Mexico Project reacted by making phone calls to Mexican state and federal authorities, providing telephone monitoring of Tlachinollan staff to continuously check their security and the case’s evolution, and conducting a visit to the school with an International Civil Observation Mission to meet with the relatives and document the situation. Above all, PBI – on the request of and in coordination with Tlachinollan – decided to activate its support network and support a range of the international actions taken by the Centre.

The diplomatic corps and the EU delegation in Mexico were contacted via phone calls, emails and meetings to express concern for what had occurred, and to ask that they would speak out publicly or take other actions to support the HRDs involved in the case. Two weeks later, the EU delegation in Mexico issued a communiqué in which they condemned the incident. Various embassies also privately expressed their concern to the Mexican authorities. In Brussels, PBI alerted the European External Action Service (EEAS) and members of the European Parliament. A joint letter with other NGOs was sent to the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy asking that the EU act and make a pronouncement. Through the CIFCA network – of which PBI is an observer-member – the case was highlighted to the secretariat of the Subcommittee on Human Rights (DROI) of the European Parliament and the advisors of various political groups, all of whom were asked to issue a resolution as a matter of urgency. Subsequently, PBI and CIFCA sent information on the political context and forwarded messages from the students’ relatives and their representatives. On 23 October, the European Parliament issued an urgent resolution which used some of the points highlighted by PBI and CIFCA, in particular Mexico’s obligation to protect the relatives and their representatives<sup>30</sup>.

The legal defence of the case is in the hands of Tlachinollan, which has accompanied students from the school since 2011<sup>28</sup>. Due to its work defending the students’ human rights, the Tlachinollan team has also suffered harassment and threats. In particular, lawyer Vidulfo Rosales Sierra had to temporarily leave Mexico in 2012 after receiving threats. As a result of the 43 students’ disappearance, Tlachinollan, other organisations who defend the case and the students’ relatives have been subject to surveillance, defamation and criminalisation through public declarations of authorities and intelligence reports which

28 In a protest in Chilpancingo in 2011, two students were executed, allegedly by Guerrero ministerial police in an attempt to remove the protest by state and federal police bodies. The case has yet to be resolved. See: “Dos estudiantes mueren en un conflicto con policías en Chilpancingo”, CNN México, 12/12/2011.

29 See PBI’s reaction at: <http://bit.ly/1DOvycM>.

30 European Parliament resolution of 23 October 2014 on the disappearance of 43 teaching students in Mexico (2014/2905(RSP)).



PBI member during the presentation of the book “Acompañando la Esperanza” in Chilpancingo, Guerrero, February 2014 © PBI Mexico

In Geneva, through meetings with key individuals and offices of the special procedures of the Human Rights Council, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the Committee on Enforced Disappearances, PBI supported the requests that Tlachinollan, together with other allies like the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center (Center Prodh), had already officially made. As a result of this joint action, the UN Special Rapporteurs on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatment or Punishment and on Extrajudicial, Summary or Arbitrary Executions, together with the UN Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, sent an urgent call to the Mexican Government and published a press release<sup>31</sup>. The UN Committee on Enforced Disappearances also issued an urgent action.

And lastly, PBI’s country groups activated their support networks. Some, such as the Norwegian, German and US groups, succeeded in having the case included in their countries’ bilateral dialogues with Mexican authorities. Others, like the UK country group, contributed such that their parliaments made pronouncements on and condemned the incident through resolutions. In Germany, PBI – through its participation in the German Coordination for Human Rights in Mexico – contributed to opening a debate on the appropriateness

of signing a German–Mexican security agreement. PBI Germany fed the debate by sharing information from the organisations PBI accompanies in the field in meetings with key actors, and by facilitating direct contacts between these actors and the HRDs. As an example, a round table was held in the German parliament with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, German civil society organisations and Silvia Méndez of Paso Del Norte Human Rights Centre (an organisation accompanied by PBI which also works on the issue of enforced disappearance, in Mexico’s North). Given the debate that Mexico’s human rights situation had caused, it was decided to delay the signing of the German–Mexican security agreement, and analyse in more detail the Mexican context and the possibility of including more clauses related to human rights.

These actions have contributed to expose what happened and the flaws in the investigation by Mexican authorities<sup>32</sup>. PBI also contributed to push for a response from the authorities, so that the security incidents against Tlachinollan and the students’ relatives do not become more serious attacks or acts of aggression.

However, the road is long and PBI’s concerns continue to be valid. Until the location of the 43 missing students has been revealed and proven with scientific evidence, until the truth has been unveiled, and until those responsible – both by action and omission – have been duly tried, the risks for those who seek justice will remain. In 2015 PBI will remain on alert for this case and the security situation of Tlachinollan and the families it is representing. Accordingly, a European tour of HRDs and relatives has already been organised for the beginning of 2015.

### PBI in Guerrero

PBI’s history in Mexico is indelibly linked to the state of Guerrero, as it is there that the first volunteer team was established in 2000, remaining until 2012. Following an evaluation of PBI’s physical accompaniment in Guerrero, the Project no longer has a team in the state but, from its office in Mexico City, continues to accompany and provide regular monitoring of the security situations of Tlachinollan, the Organisation of the Me’phaa Indigenous People (OPIM) and the Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (AFADDEM) together with an up-to-date political analysis on Guerrero as a whole. In 2014, PBI conducted three visits to Guerrero to hold meetings with HRDs and authorities, and to highlight the international concern which the state’s human rights situation continues to arouse. PBI also proposed that a Tlachinollan representative be invited by the UK Foreign & Commonwealth Office to the *Global Summit to end sexual violence in conflict*. The opportunity was also taken to hold advocacy meetings in London and Brussels to highlight the case of San Miguel del Progreso (a community in resistance against a mining project that had no prior consultation with the local people). Tlachinollan was also able to share its experience with the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders in an event jointly organised by PBI in Brussels.

31 Available at: <http://bit.ly/110Wla3>.

32 Tlachinollan’s position (in Spanish) on the flaws in the Mexican Government’s response are at <http://bit.ly/1K0CX1t> and <http://bit.ly/1AVhTC9>.



## Training the trainers: The Multiplier effect

The security and protection of human rights defenders above all depends on the specific socio-political context in which they work. Given the context of increasing risk, acts of aggression and violence which HRDs face in Mexico, and Mexico's unsatisfactory response in protecting them, PBI has continued to expand its Program for Protection and Security Workshops (PASP). In 2014, our aim was for HRDs to take ownership of the workshops they'd received, to adapt and deliver them for others. This objective continues to be listed in the recently approved Strategic Plan (2015-2017) for PBI Mexico.

### Multiplier effect

In 2013, PBI observed that *"all the Oaxacan organisations we accompany had taken on board the different tools offered in the PASP workshops, according to their needs, and incorporated different practices"*. In 2014, at least two accompanied organisations in Oaxaca reported that they had adopted some of the tools PBI had shared in its workshops, and that they were replicating them in their own workshops.

In the same vein, in May 2014 PBI and a group of five organisations which share security and protection tools for HRDs

announced a training course for trainers. As a result, 12 organisations met to share experiences and good practices in the facilitation of workshops, and to train new facilitators. It is worth noting that the great majority of the participants had received PBI workshops or consultancies in previous years. It is hoped that this gathering will be the first of many and which may encourage other human rights defenders and organisations to replicate security and protection workshops.

With that same aim, PBI decided to systematise its PASP into a "Facilitator's Guide" which collects the learnings of PBI and the HRDs with whom it has worked and shared experiences to respond to security and protection challenges<sup>33</sup>. Learnings were also included from the training for trainers. The guide lays out four different workshops so that HRDs can manage their own long-term security and protection strategies. Its objective is to offer interested organisations the necessary tools to replicate these workshops for their members, clients, other civil organisations and social movements. With this new guide, PBI hopes to empower human rights organisations so they can expand PASP's impact and transfer its knowledge to other Mexican civil society actors, thus improving their security and protection strategies.

### Share tools and reinforce skills

As part of the effort to generate this multiplier effect, PBI continued to offer security and protection workshops, as well as advocacy workshops. In 2014, 10 security and advocacy workshops were delivered, benefiting 135 HRDs, and 36 specific consultancies (mostly to accompanied organisations) were offered. At least five organisations reported further improvements this year in their internal security management. This not only demonstrates an effort to protect themselves, but it also reflects a greater consciousness – which also results in a decrease of their vulnerability as they face the risks associated with their work.

During 2014, PBI also took the opportunity to invite the Cerezo Committee to Ciudad Juarez and Torreón, where they delivered a workshop about documentation of human rights violations to 36 HRDs from 14 organisations in Mexico's North. This workshop had a double impact: on the one hand, it reinforced relationship-building within Mexican civil society, and on the other, it created an opportunity to build the skills of a significant group of HRDs.



Northern team volunteer during security workshop with member of Saltillo Migrant House © PBI Mexico

## Selection and training of volunteers: Six years of constant development



Maik Müller (far right) in the training encounter for future volunteers, Portugal © PBI Mexico

*An interview with Maik Müller, General Coordinator of the Mexico Project (MEP) since 2011. Before taking on this role, Maik volunteered on the Guerrero team between February 2008 and February 2009. Later, he worked in advocacy and fundraising with PBI Germany. Since 2009 Maik has participated in the Mexico Project's Training Committee.*

### You've been involved in the Mexico Project since 2008. What changes have you noticed since then, and how have these changes influenced the role of volunteers in the field?

Since 2008 there's been considerable development in the Mexico Project, which brought many changes to both the Project structure and the way we work. In 2008 we only had one team in Guerrero, which had seven to eight members, and a small, two-person office in Mexico City (DF). Today we have two five-person teams and also a five-person coordination office in DF. The structure outside of Mexico is also stronger.

One fact that this highlights is that the teams are smaller than before, so more responsibility falls on each volunteer. A lack of skills or training is more clearly noted in a small team, where it can be harder

to cover for those who are less prepared than in a large team. As the external evaluation<sup>34</sup> stated, the Mexico Project has expanded its tools substantially, refining and improving its capacity to provide protection to HRDs and to impact on the human rights situation. This means that beyond the physical accompaniment, there has been an increasing amount of advocacy work and facilitation of spaces for dialogue between key actors, and an improvement in the areas of both communication and security and protection workshops. The volunteer teams are fully integrated in all these activities, that is, there has been an expansion of the activities and tasks of the volunteer teams.

In the day-to-day work, this means that each volunteer has a broad and demanding range of tasks in order to fulfil PBI's mandate. It requires more specific skill-sets than six years ago, and volunteers must spend more time in the office for analysis, coordination, planning and related tasks. But it also implies more meetings with relevant actors and less time spent in physical accompaniment than six years ago. Volunteering today is thus clearly different from volunteering in 2008. At the same time, the teams now have a much stron-

ger support structure than six years ago. You can also see, when comparing both the budgets but also the actual facts, that there is now a five-person coordination office which is constantly supporting the teams, which says a lot about the backing provided for volunteers.

### What did these changes mean for training, and how has the training process been adapted?

The 2014 external evaluation confirmed that the most sophisticated work done by the Project at the moment is more difficult to align with the traditional model of volunteering, as it increasingly requires more specific skills. Undeniably, the Mexico Project considers working with volunteers as an inherent part of its culture and its values. So, there is a dichotomy between professionalism and volunteering which I don't see as two necessarily opposite concepts. It's a challenge for the Training Committee to combine these two aspects: to recruit and train people who have the firm commitment to contribute a year of their lives to defending human rights and who, in addition, have the abi-

<sup>34</sup> In 2014, the Mexico Project was subject to an external evaluation, as part of its strategy of organisational development.



lities to conduct professional work which requires a broad skill-set.

Since I joined the Training Committee, I felt that it always aimed to adapt and improve the training we provide. Today, the role plays and simulations of real-life situations from field work – like responding to an emergency – are much more elaborate and much more time in the training is dedicated to them. Simultaneously, information delivery in the form of presentations has been drastically reduced.

Although we were adapting some tools or steps in the selection process, it was after the external evaluation that we conducted a more extensive revision of the training area and the recruitment procedures. We are currently implementing various changes, and for the current recruitment process we are already working with new forms which allow us to do a more objective comparison of the applications and interviews, as we have devised more elaborate quantitative criteria. At the same time, we are exploring possible

collaborations with other PBI bodies, but also with allied organisations like Protection International, to take advantage of each organisation's experiences.

### And what has stayed the same throughout the years?

The importance of the training week – the last stage in selection – has been kept as a crucial point in the selection process. It is there that the candidates are seen face to face, interacting in a group dynamic and under pressure. The Project decided to invite more candidates and be more selective, taking into account the fact that in the last three years we've had more withdrawals than in the past. For that reason, commitment and motivation remain key criteria in the process.

Something else which has been maintained and even expanded is the trust offered to volunteers. We demand a lot from our volunteers, but we also offer an experience which, from my point of view, few organisations grant. Already in my time as

a volunteer I was attracted by the opportunity PBI gives volunteers to gain experience in the field at the side of human rights defenders, with the opportunity to learn considerably and to really do the work that other organisations only allow specialists to do, such as advocacy work or preparing publications. The range of actors who one meets over a year of volunteering with PBI, and the potential for personal growth and the development of professional skills, are both enormous if one knows how to take the opportunities and challenges that volunteering with PBI offers.



PBI Mexico members during the semestral strategic meeting in Ciudad Chihuahua © PBI Mexico

## PBI Mexico Team Members in 2014

**General Coordinator**  
Maik Müller (Germany)  
**European Representative**  
Marianne Bertrand (France)  
**Finance and fundraising Manager**  
David Ávila (Portugal)  
**Grant Management**  
Sierra Schraff-Thomas (USA)

**MEXICO CITY OFFICE:**  
**Public Relations Coordinator**  
Niamh Ni Bhriain (Ireland)  
**Field Team Coordinator**  
Patricia García Pérez (Spain)

**Security Program Coordinator**  
Ivi Simas Oliveira (Brazil)  
Elsa Pierre (France)  
**Publications and Communications Coordinator**  
Rubens da Silva (Portugal)  
Graciela Martínez González (Spain)  
Ricardo Cancela Neves (Portugal)  
**Administration and Accounting**  
Lilia Díaz (Mexico)

**NORTHERN TEAM:**  
Ricardo Cancela Neves (Portugal), Stefania Grasso (Switzerland/Italy), Sebastián Melo (USA/ Colombia), Felipe Cordero (Chile), Manon Yard (France), Arianna Bizsonni (Italy), Sinéad Nolan (Ireland), Virry Schaafsma (Netherlands)

**OAXACA TEAM:**  
Elsa Pierre (France), Hilde Koster (Netherlands), Mar Saiz (Spain), Erik Weber (Germany), Lilly Pilly Hall (Australia), Pascal Hubatka (Switzerland), Olga Arnaiz Zhuravleva (Spain), Anna Chimiak (Poland), Jannika Röminger (Finland/Germany)

**TRAINING COMMITTEE:**  
Karim Jah (Germany), Liselot Petry (Germany), Maik Müller (Germany), Sandra Camacho Padilla (Spain), Sergi Sendra Escrivà (Spain), Sierra Schraff-Thomas (USA)

**COMITÉ DEL PROYECTO:**  
Marielle Tonossi (Switzerland), Sandra Caluori (Switzerland), Sandra Froidevaux (Switzerland), William Payne (Canada), Michael Tamblyn (Australia), Daniel O Clunaigh (Ireland)

## PBI Mexico Activities in 2014

PHYSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT		
ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ACCOMPANIED BY PBI	ACCOMPANIMENTS	MEETINGS
Committee for the Integral Defense of Human Rights Gobixha (CÓDIGO-DH)	33	25
3325Services for an Alternative Education (EDUCA)	6	6
"Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño" Regional Human Rights Center (Barca-DH)	5	10
Father Alejandro Solalinde and the staff of the Hermanos en el Camino migrant shelter	2	9
Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center	3	17
Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights	10	9
Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center	10	14
Saltillo Migrant House	4	11
Pasta de Conchos Family Organization	2	13
Cerezo Committee Mexico	11	7
Tlachinollan Human Rights Center	4	3
Bettina Cruz (sporadic accompaniment)	2	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>127</b>
<b>Other organizations (state, national, international) – within Mexico and abroad</b>		<b>140</b>
ROUND TABLES, EVENTS AND PROTESTS		
Spaces facilitated by PBI	12	
Spaces observed by PBI	33	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	
ADVOCACY		
MEETINGS WITH AUTHORITIES		MEETINGS
Guerrero – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	4
Oaxaca – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	37
Chihuahua/Coahuila – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	41
Federal authorities	-	16
Diplomatic corps and Embassies in Mexico	-	31
Foreign Affairs Ministries and international bodies outside of Mexico	-	78
<b>TOTAL</b>	-	<b>207</b>
PUBLICATIONS	ENGLISH	SPANISH
Special publications	1	2
Information Pack	12	12
Annual Report	1	1
News (Web page)	52	52
Briefings	3	3
Information sheets on new accompaniments	3	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>72</b>
TOURS	NO. OF TOURS	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES
Europe	5	5
North America	1	1
CONSULTANCIES IN SECURITY, PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY		
WORKSHOPS	NO. OF WORKSHOPS	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES
Workshop	10	135
Consultancies	36	77



## Financial Report 2014

2014 has been a good year in financial terms. PBI Mexico increased its budget to expand its field work, particularly because of the decision to open a new team in Mexico's North. The percentage of funds dedicated to field work was significantly increased in comparison with previous years. PBI Mexico thanks all its donors for their financial support, through which it has been possible to conduct all of the activities planned for 2014.

A surplus of 8% was achieved, which will be used to create a reserve to cover three months of the Project's operational costs. Such reserves are considered good financial practice in not-for-profit organisations, and form part of the financial norms set by PBI's International Office. Once the reserves are greater than three months of operational costs, they are used to cover operational costs in the course of the year.

The financial data in this report is provisional, and will be subject to an audit. All income and expenditure figures are given in US dollars.

### Income



- Public state funding (37%)
- Public local or regional funding (24%)
- Embassies in Mexico (7%)
- Faith based organizations (10%)
- Foundations and other private funding (17%)
- Other funds (5%)

## PBI Mexico income in 2014

FUNDER / DONOR	Income USD
<b>GERMANY</b>	
Bread for the World /Brot für die Welt	29.181
Civil Peace Service	52.062
Institute of International Affairs (ifa), zivik program (Civil Conflict Resolution)	144.520
Misereor	11.240
<b>CANADA</b>	
Basilian Fathers Human Development Fund	6.903
Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)	6.212
CEP / UNIFOR	1.726
Canada Embassy in Mexico – Canadian Fund for Local Initiatives (FCIL)	6.635
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	
Sigrid Rausing Trust	21.468
British Embassy in Mexico	7.581
<b>SPANISH STATE</b>	
Valladolid Municipality	4.078
Santander Municipality	11.627
Catalan Agency for Cooperation and Development (ACCD)	68.804
Valladolid Provincial Council	31.462
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	
Mac Arthur Foundation	34.980
Overbrook Foundation	3.000
<b>FINLAND</b>	
Finish Embassy in Mexico	12.696
<b>FRANCE</b>	
Lawyers Bar Association of Paris	1.342
PBI France	376
<b>ITALY</b>	
Valdesian Church (Champaign 8 per thousand)	5.042
<b>SWEDEN</b>	
Amnesty International - Swedish Amnesty Fund	20.417
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>	
Bistum St. Gallen	12.400
Kriens hilft Menschen in Not	6.200
Protestant Church Saint Gallen – Tablat	1.550
PBI Switzerland	117
Switzerland Embassy in Mexico	11.493
<b>OTHERS FUNDS</b>	
Others programs	2.230
Personal Donations	19.755
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>535.097</b>

## PBI Mexico expenditure in 2014

EXPENDITURE		Budget USD	Expenditure USD
<b>FIELD PRESENCE</b>	Regional Team Chihuahua & Coahuila	78.667	81.622
	Team in Oaxaca	60.610	61.598
	Security Workshops	13.441	13.845
<b>STRATEGIC PRESENCE</b>	Capacity Building, Training and Recruiting	15.866	14.980
	Advocacy and Team Coordination in Mexico D.F.	101.644	103.332
<b>OUTREACH AND ADVOCACY</b>	Advocacy Coordination in Europe	54.778	47.765
	Communications and Publications	17.849	20.978
<b>GENERAL COORDINATION &amp; STRATEGY</b>	Human Rights Defenders Advocacy tours in Europe and North America	6.994	7.580
	Project Coordination Office	47.055	46.256
<b>FUNDRAISING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION</b>	Strategic and Development of the Project	23.976	20.382
	Fundraising and Finance	20.829	19.952
<b>GOVERNANCE</b>	Administration	15.269	15.141
	Governance and International PBI Coordination	30.451	31.304
<b>OTHERS</b>	Project Audits & External Evaluation	11.738	12.044
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>		<b>499.167</b>	<b>496.779</b>

### Expenditure



- Accompaniment of HR's Defenders & Field Presence (32%)
- Strategic Presence & Advocacy in Mexico (21%)
- Security & Protection Workshops Program (4%)
- Outreach & International Advocacy (15%)
- General Coordination & Strategic Planning (13%)
- Fundraising, Finance & Administration (7%)
- Governance (6%)
- Audits and Evaluation (2%)



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Northern team volunteers accompany the Mother's Day Protest in Mexico City, May 2014  
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**Peace Brigades International (PBI)** is a nongovernmental organization with 30 years of experience in international accompaniment and has been present in Mexico since 1999. PBI's goal is to protect the political space for people and organizations that promote human rights in a non-violent manner, and who suffer repression for their legitimate work.


PBI only works at the request of local organizations and does not replace efforts by Mexican human rights defenders to promote respect for human rights. Rather, it merely seeks to support their initiatives by standing next to them.

PBI regularly visits conflict areas, distributes information, and dialogues with civil and military authorities, as well as with human rights organizations and other civil society actors in Mexico. To promote international attention to the Mexican situation, and to help create the necessary conditions for human rights defenders to continue with their work, PBI also maintains a dialogue with the international community and international organizations such as the United Nations, disseminates information, and generates support from abroad in order to ensure the safety of Mexican defenders.

More information about PBI's work in Mexico can be found on:

[www.pbi-mexico.org](http://www.pbi-mexico.org)

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