30 years Peace Brigades International

pbi making space for peace — Defending 30 years human rights

Mandate
The mandate of PBI is to create space for peace and to protect human rights, as aproved by the General Assembly in Ontario, Canada, June 1992.

The central focus of PBI's work is that of international presence defined as one or more of the following: physical presence, physical accompaniment, public relations, networking, observing, reporting and building international support networks.

Vision
PBI envisions a world in which people address conflicts non violently, where human rights are universally upheld and social justice and intercultural respect have become a reality.

Mission
PBI works to open a space for peace in which conflicts can be addressed in a non-violent way. PBI applies a strategy of international presence and concern that supports local initiatives and contributes to developing a culture of peace and justice. We act on request of local organisations and groups working for human rights, social change and development of civil society, which use non-violent means in regions where there is oppression and conflict.

1981 — PBI is founded
The idea to start Peace Brigades International came from people with practical experience of nonviolence. The idea of a peace force, unarmed and non-violent, comes from the Quakers and Ghandi. Especially relevant was the earlier work of Ghandi's Shanti Sena peace army in India and the World Peace Brigades. On 12 January 1981 a letter signed by Narayan Desai (Shanti Sena Mandal), Raymond Magee (Peaceworkers), Piet Dijkstra (Foundation for the Extension of Nonviolent Action), Radhakrishana (Gandhi Peace Foundation) and George Willoughby was sent out to a number of organizations. It invited them to attend a conference to revive the idea of an international organization committed to unarmed third party intervention in conflict situations. This led to a meeting that took place on Grindstone Island, Canada. On the 4th of September PBI was founded!

"In case of an emergency, PBI is the first door to knock on for me and my colleagues."

Mandira Sharma
director Advocacy Forum, Nepal

"Our great respect and admiration for their altruistic work, as well as our enormous gratitude links us with PBI. I can say with certainty that if we are still alive, it is mainly because of PBI'S work."

Luis Guillermo Pérez Casas
member of the Lawyers Collective José Alvear Restrepo, Bogotá, Colombia

1983 — Nicaragua project 1983
PBI's first field work took place in Nicaragua. In September 1983 10 PBI volunteers maintained a short presence in Jalapa, close to the Honduran border, interposing themselves between US-backed contras and the Sandinista forces in order to deter hostilities. This initial PBI work was taken over and continued by Witness for Peace.

Exhumation illegal mass grave in Panzós, Guatemala, 1997.

1983 — Guatemala project 1983 - 1999
In 1983, PBI started work in Guatemala during a period of intense state terror and repression. Our work rapidly focused on protecting victims and nascent nonviolent organisations confronting government violence. Over 15 years PBI protected hundreds of Guatemalan activists and civil society organisations from state attack.

1983 — Foundation Country Group Switzerland
The first Country Group of PBI was established in Switzerland. The goals of Country Groups are to support the international organization by recruiting, supporting and training volunteers, fundraising and doing advocacy work and engaging the public in order to contribute to the protection strategy of PBI.

1986 — Foundation Country Group Germany

1986 — First Dutch volunteer to a project
Zwanet Hamming joins the Guatemala project.

"PBI provides security and the political space needed to advance human rights where they are most lacking."

Gina Hill
Donor for PBI Canada

1987 — El Salvador project 1987 - 1992
On the invitation of Lutherian Bishop Medardo Gomez PBI came to El Salvador in 1987. Volunteers accompanied organizations at risk on visits to villages with returned refugees. In 1992 the project closed after the peace agreement between the government and the guerillas was signed.

1987 — Foundation Country Group The Spanish State

1988 — Foundation Country Group The Netherlands
Evert Huisman founds the Dutch country group and is the chairman until 1994. He stays in the board until 2007.

1988 — Foundation Country Group UK

PBI volunteer Pim van Sambeek (Netherlands) with family doña María and Juana in Guatemala 1988-1990.

1988 — First volunteers are sent to projects by PBI The Netherlands
Pim van Sambeek joins the Guatemala project in different phases between 1988 and 1990. Also Suzan van der Meij joins the Guatemala project.

PBI volunteer monitors a demonstration, Sri Lanka, 1995.

1989 — Sri Lanka project 1989 - 1998
In 1989 PBI started work in Sri Lanka during some of the worst violence between government forces and the People's Liberation Front (JVP). PBI protected human rights defenders and community activists for years, until PBI was told that if it wished to remain working in Sri Lanka it would have to submit its reports to the authorities to be censored prior to their publication. This demand was not compatible with PBI's mission, so the project was closed.

People present at the General Assembly in 1989, including Evert Huisman, the founder of PBI Netherlands.

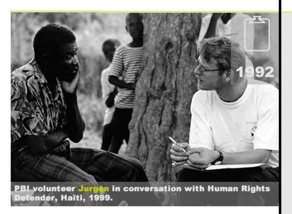
1989 — First official General Assembly

1989 — PBI is awarded the Memorial Per la Pau "Josep Vidal i Llecha"
A Catalan Peace Prize given for promoting non violent action, dialogue and commitment to non violent conflict solutions, especially in Central America.

1990 — Foundation Country Group Canada

Training for project volunteers for North America Project, 1998.

1992 — North-America project 1992 - 1999
In North-America PBI established peace teams that aimed at responding to conflicts in and around Native American communities. This work began after the 1990 military confrontation between Mohawk warriors and the Canadian Army near Montreal, Quebec. The project's work involved supporting local dialogue and reconciliation, training local human rights monitors and anti-racist education in Canada.



PBI volunteer Jurgen in conversation with Human Rights Defender, Haiti, 1999.

1992 — Haïti project 1992 – 2001
In response to increasing military violence in Haïti after the 1991 coup, a coalition called 'Cry for Justice' was established, led by Pax Christi USA, and including PBI, the Fellowship of Reconciliation, Christian Peacemaker Teams and a dozen other organisations to provide a short-term peaceful presence. After the return of Haïtian president Aristide in 1995, PBI fielded a long-term team that offered training programmes in nonviolent conflict resolution. The aim was to establish a network of Haïtian trainers to continue the work in a country devastated by years of tyranny and military rule.

1991 — Foundation Country Group USA

1991 — 10 years of PBI
Over 250 field volunteers have worked for PBI in the first ten years. PBI is a 1,7 million US dollar organization (without turnover country groups).

1991 — Foundation Country Group Belgium and France

1992 — Foundation Country Group Norway

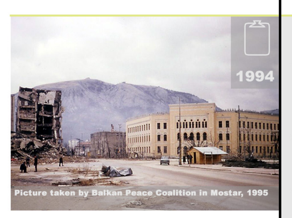
"With this large amount of criminalization of human rights defenders, the accompaniment of PBI is vital."

Lorena Cabnal
AMISMAXAJ, Guatemala

PBI volunteers accompany the farmers of the peace community San José de Apartadó, Colombia 1999 - 2000.

PBI volunteer Roos Stringer (Netherlands) on a journey with inhabitants of Miramar, Colombia, 2007.

1994 — Colombia project 1994 – present
In 1994 PBI started work in Bogotá. With the spreading violence in Colombia and PBI's growing strength internationally, this rapidly became our largest project yet. It expanded to four teams in different regions involving the constant presence of up to 40 volunteers accompanying human rights activists and internally displaced people who faced attacks and harassment from paramilitary squads. The project has in 2011 people stationed in Bogotá, Barrancabermeja, Magdalena Media (1994), Turbo, Urabá (1998) and Medellín (1999).



Picture taken by Balkan Peace Coalition in Mostar, 1995

1994 — Balkan Peace Coalition 1994-2001
The Balkan Peace Team International (BPTI) was a coalition of mostly European groups who set up long-term teams in three different locations in Croatia, Serbia and Kosovo. They carried out a variety of peace-building work, including providing support to local human rights and nonviolence efforts, fostering dialogue among civilian groups in search of peace amidst ethnic rivalry, and building links between like-minded local peace organisations in different parts of the former Yugoslavia region.

1995 — SIPAZ coalition Mexico 1995
In response to growing violence in the state of Chiapas during the 1994 Zapatista uprising, PBI started working in partnership with SIPAZ, a coalition that supports the search for nonviolent solutions for social conflicts in Chiapas.

1995 — PBI receives the Friedrich Siegmund Schultz Peace Prize
The Friedrich Siegmund Schultz Peace Prize is handed out by the German Protestant Community of Conscientious Objectors in honor of the work of PBI on non violent interventions to support citizens in conflict areas.

PBI volunteer with children at Kekchi community, El Estor, Guatemala, 2007.

1995 — PBI is awarded the Memorial de la Paz y la Soledaridad Entre los Pueblos
The prize is handed out by the Fundacion Servicio Paz y Justicia (SERPAJ - Argentina) in honor of PBI's solidarity with those who work on building peace and justice in Colombia and Guatemala.

1995 — First paid staff member PBI Netherlands
Anneloes den Hengst is the coordinator for three years.

Meeting at the General Assembly in The Netherlands, 1995.

1995 — General Assembly in The Netherlands

1996 — PBI is awarded the Pfeffer International Peace Prize
Given by Fellowship of Reconciliation (USA) to PBI for fifteen years of services to human right defenders, indigenous people, refugees and others who were protected by the accompaniment of PBI.

"Before PBI arrived, there was a lot of conflict between the community and the government. Now it is safer."

Tinus Matuan
BUK (United for Truth), West-Papua

Life in Wamena, Papua, Indonesia, 2009.

PBI workship in Papua, 2005.

1999 — Indonesia project 1999 - 2011
Recent and long-standing conflict in various regions of Indonesia led to requests from local humanitarian and non-governmental organisations. PBI worked in Indonesia for over a decade, with volunteers based in Jakarta, Aceh and Papua (Jayapura and Wamena). The project focused on peace building and education.

PBI having a meeting with members of OPIM in Ayutla, Mexico, 2006.

PBI accompanies Human Rights Defender Tita Radilla in Atoyac, Mexico, 2006.

1998 — Mexico project 1998 - present
In response to requests from organizations in three of the poorest and most marginalized states in Mexico PBI opened a project in Guerrero. PBI's presence was expanded to Oaxaca in 2008. In 2010, twelve international volunteers accompanied 65 defenders working on impunity, upholding indigenous rights and environmental protection. Volunteers are based in Mexico City, Guerrero and Oaxaca.

1999 — Weimar Human Rights Award
Long term German volunteer Heike Kammer receives the German Weimar Human Rights Award for her work as a volunteer in the teams in Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala.

1999 — Seivershausen Peace Prize
Handed out at the German anti-war centre in recognition of the peace education work in Haiti.

1999 — Medalla Conmemorativa de la Paz
Handed out by the Rigoberta Menchú Túm Foundation (founded by Menchú, 1992 Nobel Peace Prize winner) for PBI's contribution to promoting peace.

Team members embrace each other, Colombia.

1999 — Aachener International Peace Prize
Aachener International Peace Prize, given by the Aquisgran Foundation (Germany) for our work in Colombia.

1999 — Foundation Country Group Australia

2000 — Foundation Country Group Luxembourg

2001 — Nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize

"I take this opportunity to voice my full support to the valuable and legitimate work of PBI in several regions of the world, which is a source of inspiration to all of us."

Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya
United Nations Special Rapporteur on human rights defenders, in the Spanish parliament

PBI wins the Martin Ennals Award in 2001.

2001 — PBI wins the Martin Ennals Award from Amnesty International for Human Rights Defenders
"PBI's volunteers literally embody in themselves the expression of international concern and support for human rights defenders on the front line," said Hans Thoolen, Chair of the Martin Ennals Foundation. "Their courage and selflessness express the highest ideals in the defense of human rights. During the international year of volunteers, those who calmly and knowingly put their lives at risk to protect others should be recognized more than ever."

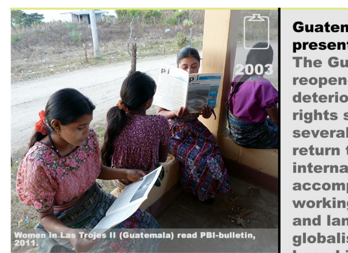
2001 — 20 year anniversary
With international conference in Switzerland, photo exhibitions in Germany and UK, workshops, celebrations and events in several other countries. PBI is a 1,8 million US dollar organization (without turnover country groups).

2001 — General Assembly in Switzerland

"I too would like to pay tribute to the work of PBI and to the bravery of the volunteers. Through their work, they are able to provide the sort of protection in Choco, Urabá and elswhere that the armed forces cannot provide."

Tony Lloyd
Ex-Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom

2002 — Foundation Associate Group Portugal



Women in Las Trojes II (Guatemala) read PBI-bulletin, 2011.

2003 — Guatemala project 2003 – present
The Guatemala project was reopened due to the deterioration of the human rights situation and requests by several organisations for PBI to return to Guatemala. Nine international volunteers accompanied 58 defenders working on the environment and land rights, impunity and globalisation. Volunteers are based in Guatemala city and regularly travel to other areas of the country. 2011 has seen the highest level of emergencies regarding human rights violations since the project reopened.

"Attacks and threats have come up against the solid wall which Peace Brigades International has become in the region."

Francisco Campo
Credhos, Colombia

Accompaniment Jitman Basnet after he received death threats, Nepal, 2007.

PBI volunteer in front of Nepalese army, Nepal.

2006 — Nepal project 2006 – present
After extensive research PBI started work in Kathmandu in early 2006. Despite the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Accord later that year making an end to a decade of civil war, and elections in 2008, Nepal has yet to find sustainable peace in 2011. An average of 14 volunteers are based in the capital Kathmandu and Gulariya, in the mid-west of the low land Terai region, and travel to many remote areas in Nepal. They work with isolated defenders and provide a range of support in addition to accompaniment, including training, field consultations and round table events.

"Just like the people of Peace Brigades in the field know, Dutch diplomats know that support and attention can offer protection."

Lionel Veer
Dutch Ambassador of Human Rights

25 years celebration panel of PBI The Netherlands, 2006.

PBI volunteer Janine Tijhoff in an interview with journalist and presenter Harm Edens, 2006.

2006 — PBI's 25th Anniversary
PBI Netherlands organizes presentations, interviews and an exhibition. Human rights lawyer Rogelio Teliz Garcia from the 'Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre' visits The Netherlands and tells the public and journalists about the situation in Mexico.

2005 — Foundation country group Italy

2005 — General Assembly in UK

Leaving due for Evert, Pim and Ronald, The Netherlands, 2007.

2007 — Board meeting PBI Netherlands
Leaving due for Evert Huisman (founder PBI The Netherlands), Pim van Sambeek (first field volunteer of PBI The Netherlands and former board member) and Ronald van Witzenburg (former chairperson PBI The Netherlands).

2007 — Weimar Human Rights Award
Long term German volunteer Heike Kammer receives the German Weimar Human Rights Award for her work as a volunteer in the teams in Colombia, El Salvador and Guatemala.

2008 — General Assembly in Germany

Advertisement used by PBI The Netherlands to recruit new volunteers, 2010/11.

2008 — Big changes for PBI The Netherlands in 2008 - 2010

Organizational
In 2008 the office moves from Amsterdam to Utrecht. There was no coordinator or fundraiser for near to 5 months in 2009, so the organization has a hard time. The new coordinator Liesbeth Lenselink starts in June 2009. The office becomes the heart of the organization with lots of active volunteers and new board members. The amount of interested field volunteers doubles and the approached network expands substantially.

Founding Father of PBI Netherlands Evert Huisman dies in 2009. For many years Evert Huisman was the driving force behind the organization. With his wealth of knowledge and his diligent efforts for a culture of peace and non violence he left an indelible impression.

Advocacy
PBI joins the Dutch network of human rights organizations (BMO). In 2010, as a member of the corporation People Building Peace, PBI signs a joint letter to the Dutch political parties about the urgent role of civilian peace keepers in conflict resolution. All big parties react positively, the Greens and the Social Party put the statement in their election program. Besides this, we manage to get almost monthly free publicity and organize speakers tours with Human Rights Defenders from Nepal, Colombia, Mexico and Indonesia.

Funds
We manage to get institutional funding for 2008-2010 which created possibilities for professionalizing the organization. Nevertheless a critical financial low point gets reached half way through the year 2010. Due to successful fund raising new funding gets established at the 28th of December 2010 as well as the commitment for a legacy. We can breath again.

2009 — Foundation Associate Group Argentina

2009 — Field research in Africa
Despite the precarious situation for human rights defenders in many parts of the continent, PBI has never established a field project in Africa. In 2009/10 we assessed the protection needs of human rights defenders across Africa to identify countries where PBI's methodology of international protective accompaniment may be appropriate. The research pointed to a clear demand from defenders in Kenya. The decision for establishing a team is yet to be made.

Leaflet of the Lawyers Alliance.

2010 — Launch of Lawyers Alliance UK and Lawyers Committee USA
The Alliances draw on the expertise and resources of the British and American profession to link with lawyers at risk abroad, helping to protect them and promote their work.

"There are two privileges attached to a foreign passport in a conflict area. You can use it to board the next flight out of trouble. Or you can use it as a tool to help protect human rights."

Hans-Ulrich Krause
Volunteer in Indonesia

2011 — General Assembly in Switzerland

The Indonesia team with partners and clients, 2009.

2011 — Exploration for new projects in Kenya and Indonesia
We will be exploring the possibilities to return to Indonesia and whether we can open a project in Kenya.

2011 — Advocacy Netherlands
As a member of the BMO, national network of human rights organizations, PBI Netherlands contributes to an important appeal towards the new minister of foreign affairs about the new, harder, foreign human rights policy.

2011 — PBI wins René Cassin prize
Given by the government of the Spanish Basque region for the promotion and protection of human rights. PBI's work in the field was particularly praised.

Members of the Committee of Family Members of the Detained-Disappeared of Honduras during a march.

2011 — Honduras field research
The situation for human rights defenders in Honduras has deteriorated dramatically since the 2009 coup. In July 2010, PBI received a formal petition from the National Human Rights Platform of Honduras, requesting that our organization establish an international accompaniment and observation project in the country. PBI formed a working group of international observers who carried out a short-term field trip to Honduras in May 2011. It is PBI's sincere hope that these observations are helpful in the future monitoring and evaluation of the situation for human rights defenders in Honduras.

Defending 30 years human rights

2011 — PBI 30 year anniversary
Still standing strong and doing what we're good at: 'Making space for peace'. International and national conferences are held all over the world. PBI is a 3,5 million US dollar organization (without turnover country groups). PBI supports and protects 50 human rights organizations, has a direct effect on more than 7000 victims of human rights violation and indirectly on many more vulnerable communities and marginalized groups.

1980 | 1981 | 1982 | 1983 | 1984 | 1985 | 1986 | 1987 | 1988 | 1989 | 1990 | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012

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