

Peace Brigades International – Nepal

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Dear All,

I hope this letter finds you well. Its purpose is to inform you that PBI has made the difficult decision to close its office in Nepal on the January 1st, 2014.

After much internal discussion, deliberation and reflection, PBI came to this decision as a result of number of factors. The current political situation in Nepal has made PBI's protective accompaniment of human rights defenders (HRDs) less effective. Owing to changes in the geopolitical dynamics in the region, and the increasing challenges for internationals working on human rights issues as a result, the effectiveness of PBI's tool in providing protective accompaniment to human rights defenders (HRDs) has decreased. As government requirements for INGOs operating in Nepal intensify, it is becoming increasingly difficult to meet authorities and high level government officials and advocate on behalf of our partners. The uncertainty of PBI's operations in this respect has had a serious impact on our ability to protect HRDs, especially as protective accompaniment works most effectively when we are able to relay the experiences of HRDs and concerns of the international community to the relevant national authorities.

A strategic review of PBI's work in Nepal was conducted in early 2012, involving extensive consultations with human rights defenders and the international community in Nepal. This identified that the needs of HRDs in Nepal have changed since PBI came to the country in 2006. The emphasis has clearly moved away from PBI's traditional protection tool of physical accompaniment, and towards security and risk assessment training, capacity building and high level advocacy. While we recognise the validity of these protection tools, we believe that there are other organisations (national and international) in Nepal who are well placed to deliver these services.

The main aim of PBI's small follow-up presence in Nepal in 2013 was to monitor the political and human rights situation, provide advocacy and networking support to partners, and explore other potential modes of working not centred on protective accompaniment.

A key achievement for PBI during this period was the assessment of NepalMonitor.org, as a tool for the protection and capacity of human rights defenders. This website mapped and forwarded human rights and security reports to human rights defenders located close to where the incidents happened. As all of the subscribers responding to our survey stated that the alerts they were receiving were either useful for their work or assessing their security, we will make sure this system is continued in the future under the care of a local organization.

Although, protection measures for human rights defenders and promotion of human rights in Nepal has been strengthened, challenges remain in completing and consolidating the peace process. Major

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"Making Space for Peace"

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issues such as the establishment of the Truth and Reconciliation and Disappearance Commission and the exclusion of an amnesty clause for perpetrators of crimes during the civil war remain. Nonetheless, Now that the country has successfully completed the Constituent Assembly elections of 2013 we are hopeful that progress can be made to improve the human rights situation in Nepal.

The fact that we are closing our office does not mean that PBI will end its work in Nepal. We will continue to raise awareness about and support the work of Nepali human rights defenders and the wider human rights community through our international offices and support networks around the world.

It has been an extraordinary seven years for PBI in Nepal. We have learned so much. We have met extraordinary people. We have made some great friends and worked very closely with many local and national level organisations. During this time, we have developed what will be a lifelong attachment to the country and its people. We will continue to carry all of this with us in whatever lies ahead.

Best regards,

Sudhir Bikram Shah

National Program Officer

On behalf of the PBI-Nepal Project Committee and Staff

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