

Peace Brigades International (PBI)

PBI is an international, politically independent organization working in Colombia, Guatemala, Nepal and Mexico. Through international observation and protective accompaniment, PBI seeks to create space for human rights defenders where they can perform their work without fear for threats and attacks.

PBI was established in Colombia in 1994, and currently has teams in Bogotá, Apartadó, Medellín, and Barrancabermeja.



This photo exhibition is a collaboration between PBI Norway and the photographer Adrian Øhrn Johansen.



RETURN

A photo exhibition about fleeing and returning in Colombia



Photo: Adrian Øhrn Johansen
Text: Ingunn Elisabet Bjørnstad
og Karianne Sørbo
//PBI Norway//

Contact info:
www.pbi.no
kontakt@pbi.no



The conflict in Colombia

Colombia is often described as one of the world's forgotten conflicts, and is seldom exposed in the Norwegian media.

The conflict in Colombia is complex and goes far back, with fighting between guerrilla groups, drug gangs, paramilitary forces and state actors.

The paramilitary forces in Colombia have been responsible for most of the displacements, killings, threats and disappearances of civilians during recent years. The country has since 2002 gone through a demobilization process of these groups. Even so, Colombia sailed up as the country with the most internal refugees in 2010. Indigenous groups and Afro-Colombians are the ones who are hit the hardest.

At the same time, Colombia is a country with a strong civil society that works for peace and human rights. These people are the ones that PBI is accompanying, so that they can continue their work without fear for their lives.

The background for the photo exhibition RETURN

In connection with PBI's 15 years anniversary in Colombia in 2009, PBI Norway and photographer Adrian Øhrn Johansen went to Colombia to take photos for this exhibition. They visited the regions in Colombia where the organization works. Most of the pictures have been taken in northeastern Colombia, where the situation is particularly critical and the conflict level is high.

The exhibition gives an insight into how human rights defenders and internally displaced communities are fighting for the most basic human rights. Their story is important, and it is a story worth telling. This is the main mission of the exhibition.



LAS ZONAS HUMANITARIAS

The photo exhibition is about internally displaced persons and their right to return to their lands despite the ongoing armed conflict. To achieve this, these communities of internally displaced persons has taken the initiative to create so-called humanitarian zones.

Local communities have set up signs around the zones, with a message to all armed groups, this including both government security forces and illegal armed groups, that they are prohibited from entering. The local communities wish to live in peace without being involved in the armed conflict.

The humanitarian zones are in accordance with International humanitarian law that seeks to protect the civilian population, and insists on the distinction between combatants and non-combatants in conflicts. The Inter-American Court of Human Rights supports the creation of humanitarian zones as a "positive mechanism for protection of the civilian population from acts of various armed groups in the area".