

What is PBI?

PBI is a voluntary organisation, founded in 1981, which works to protect human rights by accompanying and supporting human rights defenders in conflict areas. It is currently working on the ground in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Indonesia and Nepal.

Human rights violations occurring in another country are too readily ignored by the rest of us. People trying to defend themselves have to struggle to get their voices heard. PBI believes that a vital part of its work is to help those repressed voices reach out to people all over the world. Through on-the-spot observation, analysis and reporting of conflicts and human rights violations, PBI can tell the world what is happening and encourage the international community to take action.

PBI works at a grass roots level, developing close contacts with local non-governmental organisations and local, regional and national authorities. Working openly and objectively, PBI builds relationships that yield valuable information. It also works proactively by organising peace education workshops in conflict areas.

PBI teams write reports analysing socio-political developments and the human rights situation in the countries they work in. These reports are disseminated throughout the national and international community. Politically neutral, they promote respect for human rights and provide valuable information for other non-governmental organisations and diplomatic missions.

PBI's work is recognised by the United Nations and has been endorsed by many governmental and non-governmental representatives.



Photo: PBI

“...the embassy, on behalf of the Government of Canada, appreciates and admires the work which you are carrying out, not only in Barrancabermeja but in the whole country. I have no doubt at all that you are saving lives and that you're giving critical support to Colombian NGOs who are fighting for a better and fairer Colombia. I think it is no exaggeration to say that the whole diplomatic community supports this work.”

Nicholas Coghlan, Advisor,
Canadian Embassy in Colombia.

“...I have worked closely with PBI's Colombia project since it began operations in 1994. I have no hesitation in vouching for the important contribution the project is making towards the improvement in the human rights situation in Colombia.”

Susan Lee, Colombia Researcher, Amnesty International

What are the Emergency Support Networks?

The effectiveness of PBI's teams of volunteers depends on an international network of support. In situations where there is a human rights crisis, PBI draws on this network to assist in urgently applying different forms of pressure on alleged perpetrators of violations or the local authorities in order to prevent abuses happening.

The goal is to multiply the protective power of PBI's international presence, while giving thousands of citizens around the world a way to learn about the conflicts and to take effective action.

PBI seeks varying kinds of assistance from individuals, academic and religious organisations, government representatives, the UN and non-governmental bodies such as Amnesty International. In life-threatening situations PBI will activate the most appropriate alert system at its disposal. This may be done whenever one of our teams or someone they accompany is threatened by:

- death threats or abductions;
- arrests or assaults;
- expulsion of team members from the country.

The grass roots support of thousands of concerned individuals based in countries across the world is accessed through PBI's **Emergency Response Network (ERN)**.

The ERN is activated when the need for pressure requires a broad approach. Participants in the ERN are asked to send faxes, telexes, emails or letters to their MPs and UK government representatives. The Project concerned puts together a case sheet with details of the violation(s) and those involved, any background information, suggested wording of an appeal, and appropriate contacts for the intended recipients. The ERN is then alerted and each PBI country group section sends out the case sheet to the ERN members in its country who respond as rapidly as possible.

Within hours of the initial incident, hundreds of faxes and emails can be sent protesting the violation. The weight of this mass appeal to respect human rights in a particular case has a significant impact on the recipients, making them aware that such violations are not occurring in isolation since the eyes of the international community are upon them.



Exhumation by FAFG in Joyabaj, Quiche

This international concern can help dissuade the perpetrators of violations from carrying out further actions and provide reassurance to those that PBI accompanies.

This impact is particularly strong when those protests are coming from representatives of other governments or, for example, intergovernmental organisations such as the European Union (EU). When PBI wishes to apply this selective and potent form of pressure it activates a different alert network, termed the **Emergency Support Network (ESN)**.

This high-level network of influential political and diplomatic authorities was first developed through PBI's work in Colombia. It has since been employed in other PBI projects. It uses the alert more selectively, limiting its participants to individual ambassadors and politicians who have especially strong influence on the governmental authorities in the country concerned.

How does PBI work?



Leaders of the organization Guatemala Families of the Disappeared (FAMDEGUA) Photo: PBI

Through international protective accompaniment: *the physical accompaniment by international personnel of activists, organizations or communities threatened with politically motivated attacks.*

PBI began its first accompaniment in Guatemala in 1984, with the *Mutual Support Group for Families of the Disappeared*. PBI currently sustains a presence of about 80 people working in several conflicts, in response to requests for accompaniment from civil society organizations under threat.

Local activists in conflict areas often face deadly daily risks while working to build civil society from the ground up. Some of the people being protected are lawyers or NGO leaders, others are ordinary citizens: women's groups, peasant organizations, trade unions, internally displaced populations or community organizations, struggling to defend their basic human rights and dignity.

In two decades, not a single activist receiving one-on-one PBI accompaniment has ever been killed, indicating that accompaniment has proved to be a very effective form of protection, even where the overall human rights situation may have been deteriorating.

Protective accompaniment works by:

- placing international witnesses between the decision-makers and the targeted activists, which magnifies the perceived political costs of attacking them;
- exerting pressure throughout the chain of command, by meeting with all the different levels of the military and civilian hierarchy, both nationally and locally;
- encouraging and supporting the activists;
- keeping up a flow of information to the international human rights movement.

Use of accompaniment to disrupt all levels in the abuse process:

- when necessary, by activating PBI's **Emergency Response Network** and/or its high-level **Support Network** of individuals who have a strong influence on the Governments of the countries concerned.

PBI volunteer (right) on protective accompaniment with activists in rural areas near Lhokseumawe, Aceh, Indonesia, 2003 Photo: PBI



Example: ‘Colectivo de abogados’

For many years, PBI has been accompanying lawyers from the Bogotá-based Lawyers Collective (Colectivo de Abogados “José Alvear Restrepo”). This accompaniment sometimes involves round-the-clock escorts, with volunteers from the PBI team taking turns with individual lawyers of the collective.

Individual accompaniment involves being constantly ready to move according to someone else’s schedule, staying discreetly “out of their business” while maintaining visibility. Threats and attacks against human rights defenders in Colombia can affect every aspect of daily life.



Threatened human rights lawyers with Corporacion Juridica Libertad in Medellin, Colombia. PBI has been protecting human rights work in Colombia since 1994. Photo: PBI

There are 20 to 30 lawyers killed every year in Colombia. A country without a national representative body for its lawyers. Official figures estimate impunity in Colombia to be 97%, in cases of human rights violations virtually 100%.

“In the past, members of CAJAR had armed guards. But in Colombia, [the guards] sometimes killed those they were supposed to protect... Peace Brigades International is more efficient than armed escort.”

Alirio Uribe Muñoz (CAJAR lawyer and 2003 winner of the Martin Ennals Prize for Human Rights Defenders)

“There are always people on the street corners spying on us to watch our movements. So when they see that internationals are physically entering our offices, this helps us tremendously.”

Aura Elena Farfari, Guatemalan Families of the Disappeared

“We accompanied the human rights organization on their drive... We had the mayor of the town in our car and he showed us where the ELN [guerrillas] had kidnapped him. We were stopped by paramilitaries on the way back, but because we were there they didn’t check committee members’ ID cards. If we hadn’t been there, I think that something bad would have happened. The funny part is that after they said we could go, our bus overheated and we couldn’t leave. The paramilitaries helped us push the bus.”

Canadian PBI volunteer in Colombia

“Frankly, we feel more comfortable if there is accompaniment from PBI. We really need PBI on these trips.”

Khairani Arifin, RPuK Coordinator, Aceh, Indonesia

Excerpts taken from “Side by Side” by Liam Mahoney, a tactical notebook published by the New Tactics Project. © 2004 Center for Victims of Torture, Minneapolis, MN, USA

Colombia Project



A volunteer accompanies a lawyer from the Political Prisoners Solidarity Committee on a jail visit in Medellín, Colombia. Photo: Julien Menghini

The Project

PBI's Colombia Project began in 1994 following an invitation from human rights and trade union organisations inside the country. The four PBI sub-teams in Barrancabermeja, Bogotá, Urabá and Medellín accompany human rights defenders and people or organisations under threat. They act as international observers in displaced communities, conduct dialogue with authorities at local and national level, provide a conduit for information to the international community and engage in public relations and advocacy to encourage international support for Colombian human rights defenders.

Organisations accompanied by PBI include: the Association for the Relatives of the Detained-Disappeared (ASFADDES), the lawyers' collective "José Alvear Restrepo", the Inter-church commission of Justice and Peace, Peace Community of Cacarica – CAVIDA.

For details of the Colombia project, see the project website:
www.peacebrigades.org/colombia

COLOMBIA

Population: 45 million (2008 estimate)

Capital: Santa Fe de Bogotá D.C.

Language: Spanish

GNI per capita: US\$ 6,640 (2007 estimate)

Duration of conflict: more than 40 years.

Main parties to the conflict:

Colombian security forces, paramilitaries and insurgent groups (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia or FARC, Ejército de Liberación Nacional, or ELN, Ejército Popular de Liberación, or EPL). The drug cartels also contribute to the conflict.

Human rights violations:

Kidnappings, disappearances and massacres, constant threats and attacks by armed groups against civilians, human rights defenders and trade unionists; widespread forced displacement and expulsions of rural populations.



Indonesia Project



International Day against Torture June, 2005, Wamena, Papua Photo: PBI

PBI has been in Indonesia since 1999, when a team was invited in to protect Indonesian NGOs working in camps for internally displaced people around the border between West and East Timor. Since the tsunami, PBI has revised its strategic plan to provide protective services and peacebuilding activities in Banda Aceh (Aceh), Jakarta (Java) and Papua (Jayapura and Wamena).

Project aims:

- to help maintain a peaceful space for civil society to operate and grow;
- to promote non-violent resolution of conflicts;
- to foster social and political dialogue and reconciliation;
- to promote understanding abroad of the situation of Indonesians;
- to empower civil society for these purposes.

“Because of my work as a human rights activist, I have been intimidated, terrorised and detained. I had to be evacuated in a freight plane and even thought I had to leave the country. Since PBI protects me, I feel a lot safer. I can work more self-confidently and openly. I don’t have to hide anymore.” Matius Murib, Kontras Papua

Project website: www.peacebrigades.org/etp

INDONESIA

Population: 237,500,000 (2008 estimate). The December 2004 tsunami killed an estimated 94,100 people and injured 100,000

Capital: Jakarta

Language: Bahasa Indonesian

GNI per capita: US\$ 3,580 (2007 estimate)

Duration of conflict: An armed struggle for independence began in Aceh in 1976 and has intensified since 1998. A peace agreement was signed in August 2005.

Main participants in conflict:

Papua: Indonesian armed forces, police, paramilitary groups, OPM (Free Papua Organisation). Aceh: Indonesian armed forces, police, paramilitary groups, GAM (Free Aceh Movement).

Human rights violations: Large numbers of internally displaced people, illegal detentions, disappearances, extrajudicial killings and torture.



Guatemala Project



PBI volunteer Helen Woodcock, accompanying Sololá's Indigenous People's Mayor Dominga Vásquez Sololá, April 2005. Photo: PBI

The Project since 2003

The Peace Accords, signed in 1996, were expected by local human rights defenders to usher in a new and more peaceful phase. However, by 2000 the human rights situation had again deteriorated, and many Guatemalan organisations asked for PBI to return. The Project reopened in 2003. Its mandate is to:

"help improve the human rights situation in Guatemala and contribute to the democratisation process of the country by creating political space for Guatemalan human rights defenders through accompaniment and international observation".

In recent years, human rights defenders have suffered an alarming increase in threats, office break-ins in the capital city, and assassinations in the rural areas. This adverse climate results from a lack of political will to monitor the implementation of the Peace Accords, and the development of new repression strategies by both the State and parallel groups. As a consequence, the PBI team is now receiving more requests for accompaniment than ever before.

GUATEMALA

Population: 13 million (2008)
Capital: Guatemala City
Official language: Spanish
GNI per capita: US\$ 4,520 (2007)

Conflict: A 36-year conflict, in which over 100,000 people died and over 1 million were displaced, ended officially in 1996 with the Peace Accords.

Current human rights violations:

Death threats and attacks against activists, journalists, lawyers and judges working to combat corruption and impunity.

Threats against those carrying out exhumations of massacre victims.

Selective assassinations.

Continuing harassment of individuals by the army and civilian patrols.

PBI's first major project was in Guatemala (1983-1989), working with human rights activists, trade unions, indigenous peoples, women's groups, refugees, students, campesinos and entire communities.

Project website:

www.peacebrigades.org/guatemala.html



Mexico Project

Since 1996, two armed guerrilla groups (the Popular Revolutionary Army and the Revolutionary Army of Insurgent Peoples) have been active in two impoverished states, Guerrero and Oaxaca. Federal and state authorities have responded with joint military/police incursions into and occupation of hundreds of remote communities, in search of weapons and pockets of resistance.



Local human rights organizations report forced removals, rape, illegal arrests and political imprisonment, death threats, extrajudicial killings, disappearances and torture.

PBI has worked in Guerrero for the past five years, and is still the only international human rights organisation with a permanent presence in the state. The majority of requests for accompaniment originate from Guerrero, where the level of risk for human rights defenders is highest.

The Mexico Project began accompaniment work in Guerrero at the request of the human rights organisation La Voz de los sin Voz (Voice of the Voiceless). Since August 2001 the PBI team has also maintained relations with federal officials and the diplomatic corps in Mexico City. It is currently accompanying female human rights defender Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, co-founder of the Organisation of the Me'Phaa Indigenous People (OPIM), Tita Radilla Martinez, vice-president of the Association for Families of the Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico (AFADEM), the lawyers of Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre of the Mountain region and the Cerezo Committee in Mexico City which campaigns for

the release of political prisoners and prisoners of conscience. Meetings with other organisations and human rights defenders have been held in Mexico City and in the state of Oaxaca. Workshops on security and protection for human rights defenders are held in Guerrero and Oaxaca.

MEXICO

Population: 110 million (2008 estimate)

Capital: Mexico City

Language: Spanish

GNI per capita: \$12,580 (2007 estimate)

Main participants in conflict:

Human rights defenders and communities they defend under threat from Mexican security forces and paramilitaries.

Human rights violations:

Forced dislocation, rape, torture, political imprisonment, death threats, extrajudicial killings, disappearances, illegal arrests.

Project website:

www.peacebrigades.org/mexico

Accompanying the Vice-President of Association of the families of the disappeared in Mexico – AFADEM
Photo: PBI



PBI UK Making Space for Peace



Public event at SOAS April 2006. Visit by Alejandro Cerezo, Human Rights Defender Mexico. Photo: PBI UK

How you can help

PBI depends on the commitment and goodwill of its volunteers. If you have some time to spare and skills to share, you can volunteer with PBI UK:

in the London office

Working on publicity, fundraising, website design, writing for PBI, keeping up-to-date with the country projects, helping to build support networks;

anywhere in the UK

Distributing leaflets and information about PBI, fundraising for PBI UK by organising events, such as a pub-quiz or a sponsored walk/run/swim/cycle-ride; or setting up a local group.

You could even go skydiving for PBI UK – we've raised thousands by persuading people to throw themselves out of a plane, and you could join them! See our website for details.

Support this vital work by becoming a PBI member or a volunteer.
Visit www.peacebrigades.org.uk

Some PBI publications:

Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights, Liam Mahony and Luis Enrique Eguren, Kumarian Press, 1997 (£15.50)

In the Company of Fear, a videodocumentary about human rights defenders under threat in Colombia and the work of PBI International in accompanying them, 1999.

PBI UK Newsletter (quarterly), Peace Brigades International Annual Review, Field reports from project offices.

Fundraising by parachuting in the UK by PBI volunteers, 2000. Photo: PBI



PBI volunteer selection criteria

Language

Volunteers must be able to communicate fluently in the language of the project country. For some projects, volunteers should be willing to learn other local languages.

Political analysis and country knowledge

Ability to analyse political situations, together with a good knowledge of the history, politics and culture of the project country.

Non-violence, non-partisanship and non-intervention

An understanding of the theory and practice of non-violence and of all the principles governing PBI's work.

Public relations and diplomacy

PBI country teams maintain cordial relations with many groups, including popular movement organisations, NGOs and government agencies. Team members need to be confident in public relations.

They will have access to a great deal of information, which has to be kept up to date and analysed carefully. Accuracy is paramount, and volunteers must be sensitive to the risks involved in misusing information or breaching confidentiality.

Report-writing and administration

Experience in writing reports and articles is useful; IT and office skills are desirable. Administrative experience and knowledge of photography are both welcomed.

Stress management

Teams often have to work through periods of extreme stress and tension. Team members need to be able to manage their stress and work efficiently to meet deadlines under pressure.

Living and working in a group

A PBI team is a group of people living and working very closely together, in relatively small spaces. This calls for a high degree of mutual tolerance and cooperation.

Flexibility

The requests handled by teams often change at very short notice, requiring the ability to learn quickly, take on board new ideas and concepts, read into situations and rapidly assess their significance.

Cultural sensitivity

Respect for other cultures, to help the team to integrate into the project country and understand how it works.

...and more

A share in housekeeping duties may be required.

VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Before joining a PBI team, intending volunteers undergo a period of training, to assess their suitability for the challenges of fieldwork, and enable them to decide if PBI is right for them.

First step: Attending the Orientation Weekend

In the UK, we organise Orientation Weekends several times a year to introduce potential volunteers to the principles, philosophy and work of PBI, and guide them through a process of self-evaluation.

On the basis of the trainers' recommendations and the self-evaluation of the potential volunteers, the Management Committee of PBI UK decides on the suitability of candidates to attend further training for a region.

Second step: Attending project-specific regional training

Each country project runs periodic regional training courses lasting 7-10 days. The training covers the history and current political situation of the project country, the causes of the conflict and the role of PBI in the country, together with the kinds of situations team members may have to address. At the end of the training, candidates will be informed of their suitability to join the project.

PBI VOLUNTEER APPLICATION FORM

Personal Information

Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

_____ Postcode _____

Email _____ Telephone _____

Date of birth _____ Nationality _____

Interests (Please tick project(s) you are interested in)

Colombia Project Indonesia Project Nepal project Mexico Project
 Guatemala project Office volunteer in London (publicity/ outreach/ fundraising/ advocacy)

Skills (Please list any skills relevant to this work)

Computer knowledge / skills

Languages

First language: _____

Other languages (indicate degree of fluency: **A**-fluent, **B**-strong, **C**-good, **D**-fair, **E**-weak)

Language	Speak	Write	Read	Understand



Peace Brigades International UK Section

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London N19 5NJ
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www.peacebrigades.org.uk

Education (Brief details of your education and qualifications)

Employment (Brief details of any paid/unpaid employment)

Overseas work (Brief details of any work undertaken outside the UK)

Why do you want to work for PBI?

Where did you hear about us?

Thank you for your application.

APPENDIX 1 - CULTURAL DIVERSITY AND EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES POLICY



Peace Brigades International UK

PBI UK is committed to providing equal opportunities to its employees and volunteers and seeks to ensure that all employees and volunteers are treated and treat each other, with respect and dignity.

We aim to ensure that all employees, job applicants and volunteers, do not suffer unfair discrimination because of their gender, marital status, race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, religious belief, age, disability or sexual orientation. We seek to ensure that all people with whom we work are valued for their contributions and are given the opportunity to realise their full potential within the organisation.

Recruitment, selection and other procedures aim to ensure that individuals are given equal opportunity in recruitment, training and promotion, and are treated on the basis of their relevant abilities and merits according to the requirements of the job. PBI UK is committed to a program of action to make the policy effective and to this end constantly reviews the procedures and monitors the results as appropriate.

In the course of our work there may be occasions where nationality has to be taken into account, for example on specific country projects where it is paramount that we are and are seen to be impartial. To maintain this impartiality it is our policy not to accept volunteers onto country projects if they are nationals of the country involved or if the project is in their country of origin. Subject only to such situations the principles of equal opportunities will apply to recruitment, promotion, training and all terms and conditions of employment.

Reasonable steps will be taken to prevent any form of discrimination, and employees and volunteers are expected to co-operate to make this policy effective.