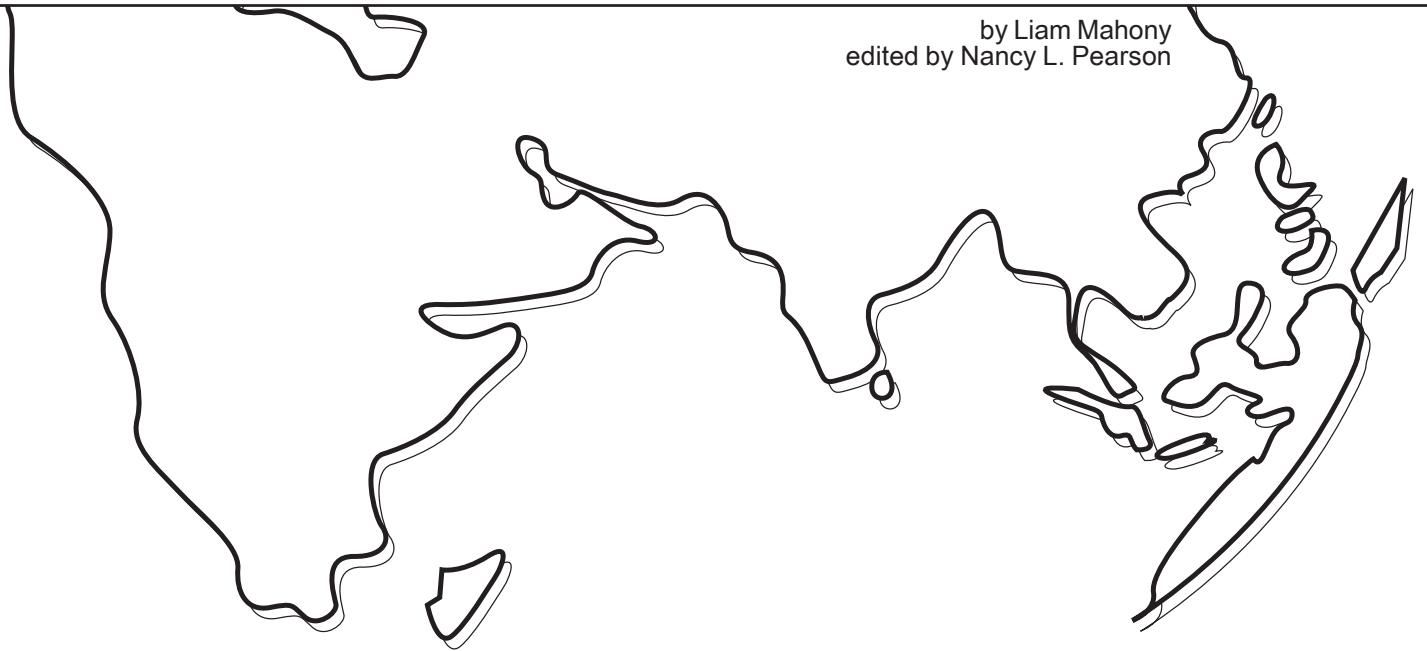


## **Side by Side**

Protecting and encouraging threatened activists with unarmed international accompaniment

by Liam Mahony  
edited by Nancy L. Pearson



A Tactical Notebook published by  
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The views expressed in this report do not necessarily reflect those of the New Tactics in Human Rights Project. The project does not advocate specific tactics or policies.

The views and analysis of this document are based largely on experiences of Peace Brigades International, but are entirely the responsibility of the author.

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## Peace Brigades International

Peace Brigades International is a nongovernmental organization that promotes the nonviolent transformation of conflict and protection of human rights. Upon invitation, PBI sends teams of trained volunteers into areas of repression and conflict. The volunteers accompany threatened civil society activists, their organizations and communities threatened by political violence. The PBI model has proven that this external presence can deter violence and thus create greater space for local activists to carry out their important work.

PBI has projects in Colombia, Indonesia, Guatemala and Mexico, and has previously worked in Sri Lanka, El Salvador, Haiti and with indigenous peoples in North America. This work is supported by PBI chapters in 15 countries in Europe, North America and the Asian-Pa-



cific region. In addition to accompaniment, some PBI projects also carry out workshops, training and other types of peace education, with the goal of strengthening local capacity for conflict transformation.



September 2004

Dear Friend,

Welcome to the New Tactics in Human Rights Tactical Notebook Series. In each notebook a human rights practitioner describes an innovative tactic that was used successfully in advancing human rights. The authors are part of the broad and diverse human rights movement, including nongovernment and government perspectives, educators, law enforcement personnel, truth and reconciliation processes, women's rights and mental health advocates. They have both adapted and pioneered tactics that have contributed to human rights in their home countries. In addition, they have used tactics that, when adapted, can be applied in other countries and other situations to address a variety of issues.

Each notebook contains detailed information on how the author and his or her organization achieved what they did. We want to inspire other human rights practitioners to think tactically — and to broaden the realm of tactics considered to effectively advance human rights.

Since the mid-1980s, human rights groups and other activist organizations being targeted with repressive abuses have been calling on international NGOs to provide them with direct accompaniment by international field workers. These field workers — usually volunteers — spend twenty-four hours a day with threatened activists, at the premises of threatened organizations, in threatened communities or witnessing public events organized by threatened groups. The international presence serves as a deterrent against the use of violence. In order to ensure this deterrence, these international accompaniment organizations are part of transnational networks poised and ready to mobilize political pressure against perpetrators should their volunteers witness any attacks or should their clients be further threatened.

The entire series of Tactical Notebooks is available online at [www.newtactics.org](http://www.newtactics.org). Additional notebooks are already available and others will continue to be added over time. On our web site you will also find other tools, including a searchable database of tactics, a discussion forum for human rights practitioners and information about our workshops and symposium. To subscribe to the New Tactics newsletter, please send an e-mail to [newtactics@cvt.org](mailto:newtactics@cvt.org).

The New Tactics in Human Rights Project is an international initiative led by a diverse group of organizations and practitioners from around the world. The project is coordinated by the Center for Victims of Torture and grew out of our experiences as a creator of new tactics and as a treatment center that also advocates for the protection of human rights from a unique position — one of healing and reclaiming civic leadership.

We hope that you will find these notebooks informational and thought-provoking.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kate Kelsch".

Kate Kelsch

New Tactics Project Manager

## Introduction

*"I can say with certainty that the fact that we are alive today is mainly because of Peace Brigades' work."*

— Luis Perez Casas, Lawyer's Collective Jose Alvear Restrepo, Bogotá, Colombia

*International protective accompaniment* is the physical accompaniment by international personnel of activists, organizations or communities threatened with politically motivated attacks. Peace Brigades International has been developing this tactic since the mid-1980s, sending hundreds of volunteers into different conflict situations around the world. PBI currently sustains a presence of about 80 people working in several conflicts, responding to requests for accompaniment from all kinds of threatened civil society organizations. Accompaniment can take many forms. Some threatened activists receive 24-hour-a-day accompaniment. For others the presence is more sporadic. Sometimes team members spend all day on the premises of an office of a threatened organization. Sometimes they live in threatened rural villages in conflict zones.

This accompaniment service has three simultaneous and mutually-reinforcing impacts. The international presence *protects threatened activists* by raising the stakes of any attacks against them. It *encourages civil society activism* by allowing threatened organizations more space and confidence to operate and by building links of solidarity with the international community. And it *strengthens the international movement*

*for peace and human rights* by giving accompaniment volunteers a powerful first-hand experience that becomes a sustained source of inspiration to themselves and others upon their return to their home country.

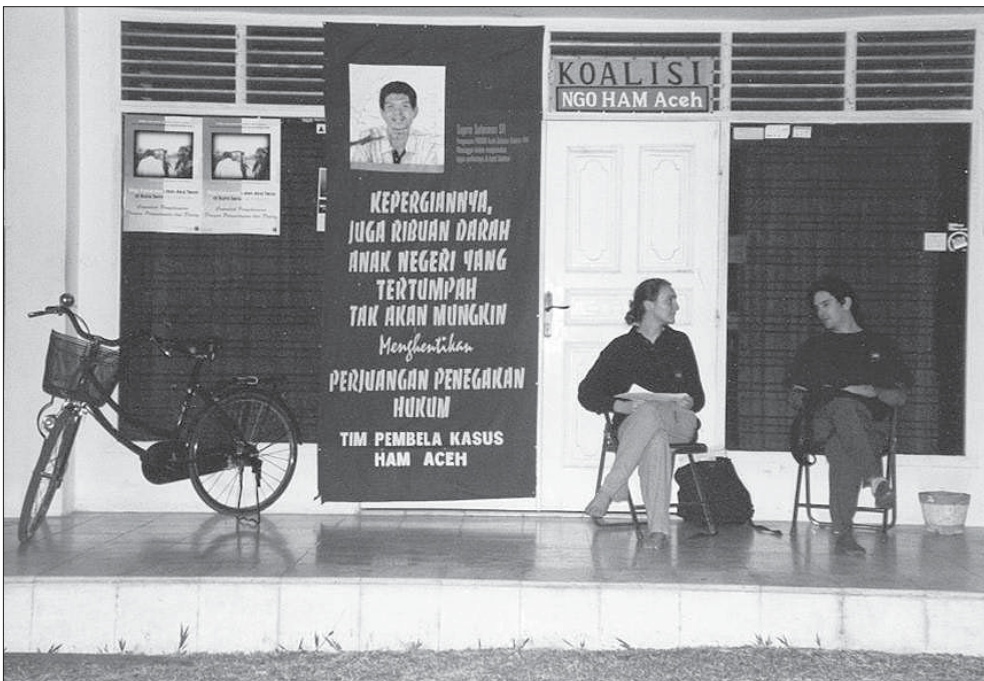
This tactical notebook will analyze how protective accompaniment works, based on the substantial experience of PBI in Colombia, Indonesia, Mexico, Guatemala, Haiti, Sri Lanka and El Salvador. Since the 1990s, numerous other organizations have also provided protective international accompaniment in other settings, modifying the approach according to their particular identity and mission. In the final section of the notebook I will also offer a brief comparative discussion of several of these experiences.

## What is protective accompaniment?

The accompaniment volunteer<sup>1</sup> is literally the embodiment of international human rights concern, a compelling and visible reminder to those using violence that it will not go unnoticed. The volunteers act essentially as unarmed bodyguards, often spending twenty-four hours a day with human rights workers, union leaders, peasant groups and other popular organizations that face mortal danger from death squads, state forces or other abusers. The premise of accompaniment is that there will be an international response to whatever violence the volunteer witnesses. Behind such a response lies the implied threat of diplomatic and economic pressure—pressure that the sponsors of such violence prefer to avoid.

Victims of human rights abuse are frequently those attempting to organize social change movements that question their society's powerful elites. An international presence at their side can be a source of hope to these activists. It assures them that they are not alone, that their work is important and that their suffering will not go unnoticed by the outside world. Thus the volunteer's presence not only protects, but also encourages the growth of civil society activism in repressive situations.

Accompaniment is a service to key local protagonists in struggles for justice, nonviolence and human rights. These threatened activists and communities are the hope for the future, and every accompaniment volunteer returns home inspired by the privilege of having



Nighttime watch over the offices of Koalisi HAM, or Coalition for Human Rights, Aceh, Indonesia. PBI has been working in Indonesia since 1999, starting in West Timor, then expanding to Aceh, where both separatist rebellion and state forces were repressing civil society groups. Most recently, PBI has expanded to establish a team in Papua. All photos from PBI Photo Archives.



been able to offer a modest contribution to protect and encourage their powerful work. These local activists are the ones building civil society from the ground up while facing deadly and daily risks. Some of the people being protected are extraordinary leaders—courageous and charismatic activists, lawyers or NGO leaders. Others are average citizens thrust into extraordinary circumstances by the trauma of events around them. Whether they are lawyers, women’s groups, peasant organizations, labor unions, internally displaced populations or community organizations, they are all struggling to defend their basic human rights and their dignity.

Since PBI’s first accompaniment began in Guatemala in the early 1980s, thousands of people have been protected. Hundreds of organizations and activists have felt the security and encouragement to expand their work, to persevere despite the risks. Volunteers have traveled from all over the world to participate in this service.

In the course of two decades of experience not a single activist receiving one-on-one PBI accompaniment has ever been killed. In only two situations has a deadly attack occurred against a community while PBI sustained a presence there. And not a single PBI volunteer has been killed. Accompaniment has proven to be very effective protection, even in situations where the overall human rights situation was deteriorating and where death squads seemed impervious to external pressure.

<b>PBI’s global accompaniment presence</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>2004 field presence</b>
Guatemala	1983-1999, 2003-present	6
El Salvador	1987-1992	NA
Sri Lanka	1989-1998	NA
Colombia	1994-present	45
Indonesia	1999-present	16
Mexico	2001-present	11

PBI has also implemented peacemaking projects which were not focused on protective accompaniment, including one in Haiti from 1995-2000 which carried out workshops in nonviolent conflict resolution, and another working with Native American peoples in North America and Canada (1991-1999).

PBI began its first accompaniment in Guatemala in 1984, with the Mutual Support Group for Families of the disappeared. Over two decades in Guatemala, PBI accompanied hundreds of civil society organizations emerging from years of terror, helping the country move into a delicate democratic transition.



Leaders of the organization Guatemalan Families of the Disappeared (FAMDEGUA).



Threatened human rights lawyers with Corporacion Juridica Libertad in Medellin, Colombia. PBI has been protecting human rights work in Colombia since 1994 and currently sustains a total presence of 45 people in four different Colombian cities: Bogotá, Medellín, Barrancabermeja and Turbo.

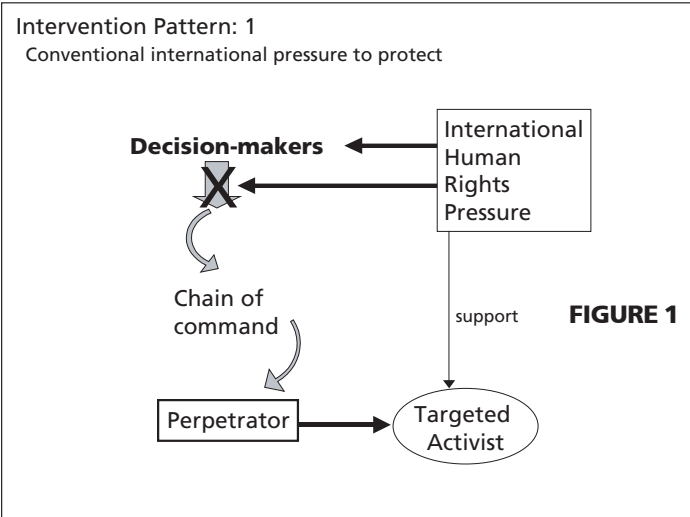
## How does accompaniment work? Why is it effective?

Accompaniment has three primary impacts

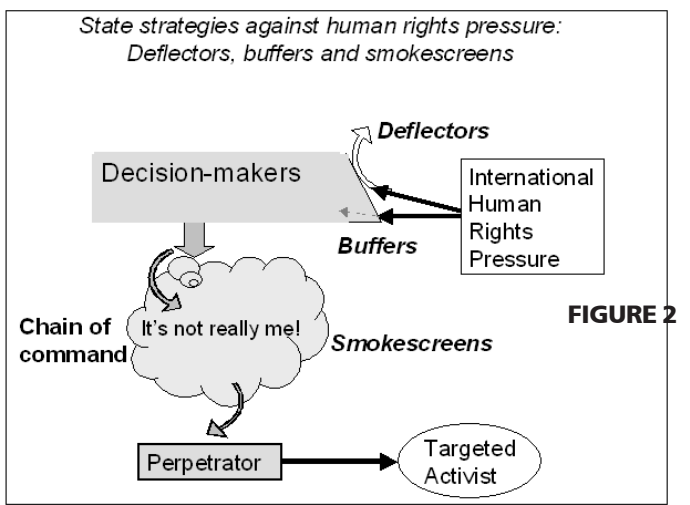
- Protection of threatened activists and organizations
- Encouragement of individuals and civil society movements
- Building a global movement for peace and human rights

### PROTECTION: DETERRING ATTACKS AGAINST CIVIL SOCIETY LEADERS, GROUPS AND COMMUNITIES

International accompaniment can succeed in deterring attacks because the decision makers behind these attacks seldom want a bad international image. They don’t want the world to know about what they are doing. They don’t want diplomats making them uncomfortable mentioning human rights problems in their meetings. They don’t want to read in the international press that they are being called monsters or criminals. They will avoid all that if they can.



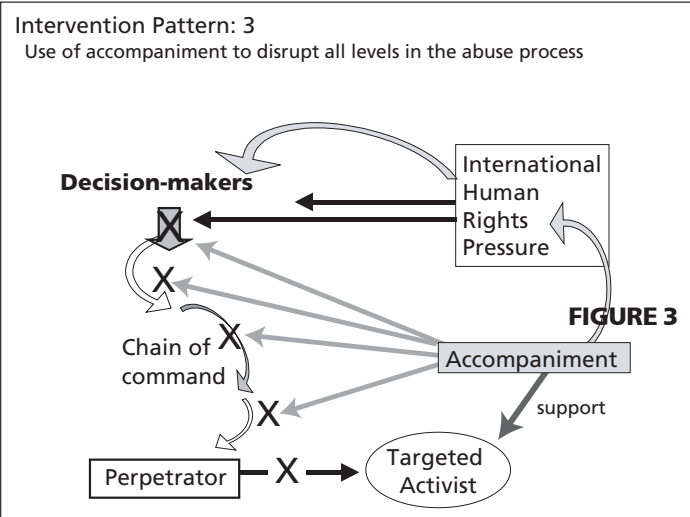
The decision makers may be high-level government officials, high-level military officials, lower-level officials, private elite businessmen (local or international) with influence or private enforcement capacity, or leaders of non-state armed groups. In every case, the accompaniment functions by increasing the perceived political costs of ordering an attack in front of these international witnesses—witnesses whose sponsor organizations are committed to making such attacks as costly as possible.



The direct perpetrators of attacks might be soldiers, police, paramilitary organizations, guerrillas or hired assassins, among others. In each case, the accompaniment strategy requires a thorough analysis of the chain of command between the perpetrator and the higher-level decision maker. We should not assume that the thugs who pull the trigger are unaffected by international presence. No one wants an unexpected witness around when they are carrying out a crime. The volunteer's presence may have a moral influence on individual perpetrators. It also introduces an uncertainty factor—the attacker does not know what the consequences of this witness will be, so unless he has explicit orders that take the accompaniment into account, he is likely to restrain himself rather than risk getting in trouble with his superiors.

**ACCOMPANIMENT PROTECTION AND THE LINE OF COMMAND**

To appreciate the added value of accompaniment as protection, consider first the more traditional model of international human rights pressure (see figure 1). Although systemic human rights abuses require the collaboration of a variety of actors at different levels in the line of command, pressure is usually only directed at the decision makers at the top, urging them to stop abuses. In addition, the international community offers a variety of kinds of support to threatened activists themselves.



But international human rights pressure is now a decades-old practice, and states have developed very



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



nimble countermeasures to prevent this pressure from having its desired impact (see figure 2). *Deflectors* include the use of propaganda to destroy the credibility of the accusing organization or the targeted activists, such as labeling them terrorists; in this way states gain international support from allies for their policies. *Buffers* include a variety of mechanisms by which states absorb and co-opt human rights pressure without overt denials, including the creation of state agencies to deal with the human rights community, making the case that the state recognizes the problem and is taking all possible measures. *Smokescreens* allow the decision maker to argue that it is not responsible for the abuses, even though it admits they occur. A common and devastatingly effective smokescreen is the use of paramilitary or death squad operations secretly under military control. In other cases, justifications such as “lack of discipline,” or “loose cannons” distance the high-level decision makers from the abuses. Smokescreens give both the state and its international allies a level of *plausible deniability* when faced with accusations.

A good accompaniment strategy, as shown in figure 3, both complements and augments traditional pressure, in the following ways:

- The accompaniment volunteer is directly visible to potential direct perpetrators, a unique impact among international efforts.
- PBI extends the pressure throughout the chain of command, by meeting with all different levels of the military and civilian hierarchy, on both national and local levels. Without this, there is no assurance that the “message” of international pressure is transmitted through the different levels. In these meetings PBI diplomatically ensures that every echelon of the decision-making system is aware of the presence and of its link to the international community. This process increases accountability, to some extent combating the smokescreens.
- The accompaniment vastly strengthens the international support felt by the threatened activists.
- The “first-hand witness” effect strengthens the credibility of the local activists, their organizations and the overall international effort to protect them. As a constant reminder that there is still a problem, it also confronts the state’s buffer strategies, as it is harder for the state to claim it is solving the problem itself.



PBI volunteers inform the local police that they are accompanying members of RATA, or Rehabilitation Action for Torture Victims Aceh.



In May, 2003, PBI brought officials from 12 embassies to Guerrero, Mexico, putting them in direct contact with local human rights organizations to hear their stories.

- The presence of volunteers from many countries “in the line of fire” engages their embassies and home governments more forcefully in human rights protection, strengthening the overall pressure on top decision makers.
- When an attack or harassment happens despite PBI’s presence, PBI’s global emergency alert network immediately responds, with both high-level and grassroots pressure, reminding decision makers that they cannot allow such “mistakes.”



### Example: Colectivo de abogados

For many years PBI has been accompanying lawyers from the Bogotá-based Lawyers Collective (Colectivo de Abogados José Alvear Restrepo), one of the largest and most threatened professional human rights organizations in Colombia. 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 at someone else's schedule, staying discreetly "out of their business" while maintaining visibility. Threats and attacks against human rights defenders in Colombia have been so merciless that they can affect every aspect of daily life.



PBI provides daily protection for Alirio Uribe of Colombian lawyers collective and winner of the prestigious Martin Ennals award for human rights defenders in 2003. "We receive this award in the name of so many sacrificed human rights activists, to affirm that terror has not, and will not, force us to yield in our efforts to defend the most precious values of humanity." Alirio Uribe Munoz, March 31, 2003.

*Wherever Alirio travels, be it from home to work, to court, or to meetings around the city, he moves in a bulletproof car, wears a bulletproof jacket and has a constant PBI presence at his side.... One day we parked in the underground car park of the 30-storey building in which his office is located. "Do you mind if we walk up rather than take the lift?" he asked. "Its just that I never get any exercise these days—its simply too risky for me to go to the gym or the park." —James Savage, PBI Volunteer from the UK*

*Thank you for all this, thank you for these five years, thank you for assuming the risk of living in this country, thank you for the hope which you have made possible to build. — Danilo Rueda, Colombia*

*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 Farfan, Guatemalan Families of the Disappeared*

### ENCOURAGING CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE FACE OF REPRESSION

In situations of widespread political repression or terror, activists are not asking for accompaniment merely to confront a personal fear or an immediate threat. They are confronting systemic policies of violence that can frighten whole populations into political paralysis. Deliberate political use of terror is as old as war itself. In this century, however, advances in the sciences of weaponry, information control, mass media and psychology have facilitated the exercise of mass-scale terror with a previously inconceivable efficiency. Social control is achieved by efficiently manipulating diverse individual responses to danger and fear.

The goal of state terror is to keep people isolated from each other. Civilian organizations are a threat to overcoming that isolation: Any organizing is empowering and, as such, confronts and questions the terror system.



Cerezo siblings, with photos of their incarcerated brothers, who are being held in a Mexican prison. PBI has had a team in Mexico since 2001, accompanying human rights activists who are confronting a deeply ingrained national system of injustice and corruption. Unfortunately, Mexico has succeeded in sustaining a relatively positive international image, making it a difficult challenge to focus international human rights attention on systemic abuses there.



PBI volunteers planning with Indonesian activists.



Terror is very efficient: You don't need to kill everyone if you can paralyze the majority by only directly attacking a minority. It is the audience that counts, with each victim advertising the state's power to others. Torture, short of death, is an especially effective tool for encouraging collective paralysis. Human rights abuse is thus often a rational choice made by strategic thinkers. The techniques have been developed through a long history of military psychological operations. To policymakers, terror may seem no more immoral than other strategic choices in a war against an enemy. And, as with other military or strategic policies, strategists study the successes and failures of others, perfecting the tools.

Nevertheless, even the most organized state terror system cannot watch everyone, nor kill anyone at any time it pleases. Surveillance is expensive and labor-intensive. Processing and interpreting all the data from surveillance is even more demanding, and intelligence planners frequently have more data than they can effectively analyze. The state's omnipotence is never complete, but it wants people to think so, since this belief prompts a self-regulation of political activity.

The desired impact of repression, threats and intimidation is to diminish the range of action for civil society groups. People feel they have fewer tactical choices for public action that won't result in retaliation. They may fear traveling outside the major cities. Their organizations suffer diminished participation—membership drops. And activists often suffer serious mental health problems resulting from the stress of constant insecurity.

By providing encouragement to these activists and organizations, protective accompaniment reduces the fear, reduces the stress and promotes increased participation and organizing. Activists and groups begin to choose tactics and actions they would otherwise fear to try. They travel where they would otherwise fear to go. New members join their organizations who might otherwise stay away in fear. The sense of isolation that was inspired by fear is broken by international solidarity.

### **Case study: Communities resisting war in rural Colombia**

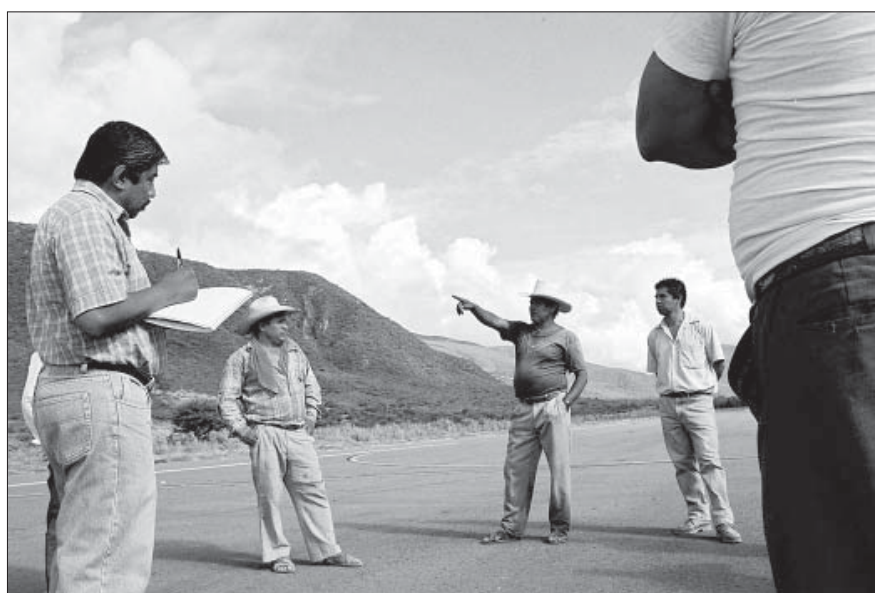
The Colombian conflict has spawned the worst human rights situation in the western hemisphere, with thousands of political murders annually and over 2 million internally displaced people. In the rural regions of Urabá and Chocó, Colombia, several communities of displaced peasants have initiated a daring and inspiring strategy in

the face of armed conflict and repeated expulsions from their land. With the support and solidarity of national and international NGOs they are creating communities with a special commitment to resist any collaboration with any of the several armed parties that terrorize the region, which include the military, multiple guerrilla organizations and the most brutal of all: paramilitary associations who collaborate with the army. Some communities are called "peace communities," others, "communities in resistance." One, along the Cacarica River, calls itself a "Community of Self-determination, Dignity and Life."

The essence of the strategies of these communities is to create a sense of unity and a disciplined response to all the armed parties, and to back this up with national and international strategies of solidarity and pressure in order to defend their right to a space free from military, paramilitary or guerrilla harassment. Peace Brigades International has provided steady accompaniment in two of these communities for sev-



UK volunteer James Savage discussing protective measures with a human rights activist in Bogotá, Colombia.



Abel Barrera collecting testimony on displacement and corruption, Mexico.

eral years—San Jose de Apartadó and Cacarica. The communities have faced a constant barrage of attacks and harassment of different sorts, from across the armed spectrum, but mostly from paramilitary groups aligned with the army and the economic elites of the country. Paramilitaries have murdered many community members, and when terror did not succeed in scaring the residents out of their peace strategy, the paramilitaries turned to economic strangulation, blockading access routes. This harassment has been backed up by a concerted public relations smear campaign by the army against the communities, labeling them “terrorists.”

In Cacarica, Peace Brigades has a small hut where volunteers stay. Volunteers can get there only by boat, and they spend several days to a week at a time in the community before rotating out, returning to their home-base in the nearby city of Turbo when replaced by other volunteers. They stay abreast of all political developments in the region and in the community. Volunteers have satellite phones, with which they can immediately alert the rest of the organization about any attack on the community. On these phones they also have the home and mobile numbers of local police and military commanders, of diplomatic allies and other authorities who will also be alerted the moment anything happens requiring a rapid response.

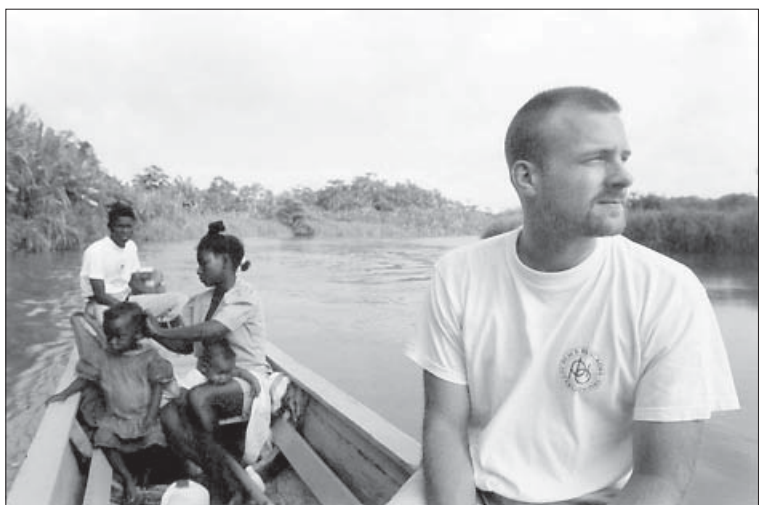
If a paramilitary incursion should occur, for instance, PBI volunteers will be able to alert the international community literally within seconds. PBI’s team in Bogotá can immediately contact key governmental and military officials as well as allies in the diplomatic community to generate a rapid response. They will also immediately contact PBI’s offices around the world, and generate a strategic response on an international level if necessary. On numerous occasions PBI has been able to put national and international pressure on the local military to react even while paramilitaries were still carrying out their attacks or harassment.



PBI hut in Cacarica during flooding.



Accompanying a community member to fields abandoned since last paramilitary incursion.



PBI/USA Co-Director Andrew Miller in 1999 as a Colombia Project volunteer accompanying internally displaced communities in Choco.

The war in this region has been intense, and it is an area nearly completely controlled by right-wing paramilitaries, who have not relented in their harassment of the communities. So it is somewhat difficult to measure the protective impact of the presence. However, the fact that physical attacks against residents reduced after the first years and the paramilitaries turned to more subtle economic tactics could be a sign of the impact of PBI's presence and the generally high level of international solidarity the communities received.

The harassment has also extended to PBI. In fact, in 2003 and 2004, high-level military officials and Colombian President Alvaro Uribe himself issued a series of controversial statements alleging links between these communities, their international accompaniment and guerrilla "terrorists." President Uribe asserted, "I reiterate to the police, if these [foreign human rights observers] continue to obstruct justice, put them in prison. If they have to be deported, deport them."

PBI organized a massive international response (see box) demanding the retraction of these accusations and insisting that the government assure the security of the international presence.

PBI volunteers are considered almost members of the community. The residents feel a strong sense of solidarity from and towards PBI, whom they see showing a steadfast commitment to their struggle for dignity. They have expressed on numerous occasions how much encouragement they get from PBI's presence and how it strengthens them to carry on.

## Leverage in action

Samples of international responses to support and protect the presence of PBI in the peace communities after governmental accusations in 2004:

- A letter of concern to President Uribe signed by 60 members of the U.S. Congress
- A delegation of embassy officials to Urabá, including from the U.S., British, Spanish, Canadian, Dutch and the United Nations.
- Numerous press releases by national and international NGOs
- Supportive articles in Colombian national newspapers
- A special meeting between the European diplomatic delegation and Vice President Santos
- Public statements of support for PBI from UK government minister Bill Rammell, as well as the French Ambassador
- A public communiqué by the European Union
- Public expression of concern by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
- A motion of support before the Australian Senate

The volunteers who have had the opportunity to live in Cacarica and San Jose de Apartadó have been changed forever by the experience. They will never forget the dedication, the creativity, the humility and the courage of the people in these communities who are standing up nonviolently to some of the most vicious paramilitary groups in the world. And the volunteers are bringing this inspiration with them when they go back to their home country.

*Frankly, we feel more comfortable if there is accompaniment from PBI. We really need PBI on these trips. —Khairani Arifin, Koordinator Umum from RPuK, Aceh, Indonesia.*

*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' IDs 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. —Kelli Corrigan, Canadian volunteer in Colombia*





## Encouragement, protection and political space<sup>2</sup>

The concept of *political space* is crucial to understanding how the incremental protection and encouragement provided by accompaniment interact with each other. Each actor in a complex conflict situation, whether a soldier or a human rights activist, perceives a broad array of possible political actions and associates a certain cost/benefit or set of consequences with each action. The actor perceives some consequences as acceptable, some not acceptable, thereby defining the limits of a distinct political space (see figure 4).

Accompaniment alters this mapping of political space for a threatened human rights activist (see figure 5). It shifts the borderline upward, expanding the space of political action available to the activist. The middle ground is made up of actions which will no longer be attacked in an unbearable fashion. There are still actions which will provoke unacceptable consequences, even with accompaniment.

The notion of “acceptable” consequences can be fluid over time and will vary greatly among individuals or organizations. For some, the torture or death of a family member might be the most unbearable consequence. For others a threshold might be crossed at the first threats. An organization might be willing to risk the death of a member, but not the annihilation of the whole group.

Accompaniment tends to limit, or shrink, the aggressor’s options for violent or repressive action—which we will call “impunity space” (see figure 6). Again, there will still be actions whose consequences are acceptable. As with the activist, so with the aggressor: The concept of “acceptable” is fluid and variable. One government official might be extremely savvy and sensitive to international criticism, while an independent death-squad leader might be more immune.

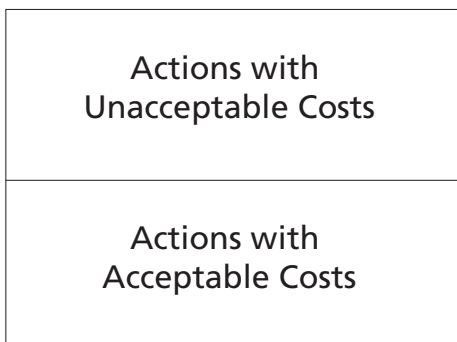
Accompaniment is effective, in figures 5 and 6, in the gray zone. If the aggressor’s ability to attack has been significantly limited, the presence is a real protection. If the activists can carry out significant political activities that otherwise they would have avoided, then that accompaniment has encouraged the strengthening and growth of a nonviolent civil society.

*But no one knows where the borders are!* This is the critical complication, which requires an expansion of our analysis. All actors are guessing about the possible repercussions of their actions, and they all make mistakes. A dictator might not have attacked a certain organization if he had known that this would attract greater diplomatic support to the organization and increase its international profile and credibility. Meanwhile, the activists are also making mistakes: A young factory worker may think it would be dangerous to be an outspoken union leader. But she figures the odds are more in her favor if she is just a quiet rank-and-file member. Then she’s dead. At the factory next door, everyone is too scared to even talk about unionizing. Yet maybe there would be no repercussions at all. They don’t know. Nobody knows. Everyone learns by trial and error, and the errors are costly.

People base their decisions on their own perceptions and projections of what consequences they might suffer. These projections might be based on substantial historical or political analysis, on simple prejudices, on an emotional reaction to a past trauma, or on any number of other psychological factors. Graphically, this uncertainty and the consequences on the impact of accompaniment is shown in figures 7 through 10.

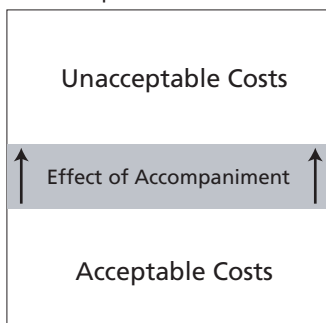
In space A (figure 7) the activist unknowingly walks into danger and suffers the consequences. In space B, fear has been instilled so effectively that the activist is inhibited from taking actions that are in fact relatively safe. In situations of state terrorism, this space can be huge: Nearly all political or social action is feared; only passivity appears to have acceptable con-

**FIGURE 4**  
Each Actor’s Political Space

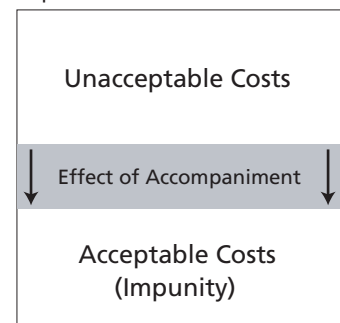


Effect of Accompaniment on Each Actor’s Political Space

**FIGURE 5**  
Accompanied Actor’s Political Space

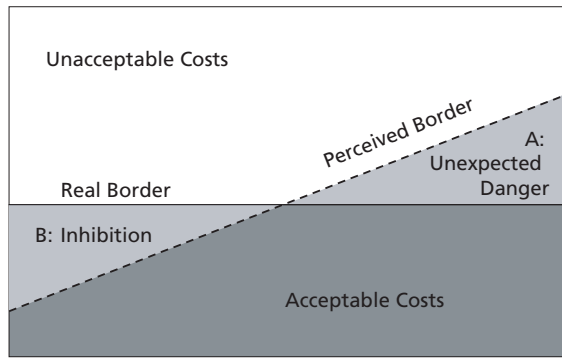


**FIGURE 6**  
Aggressors’ Space for Repressive Action



Activist's Political Space: Reality & Perception

**FIGURE 7**

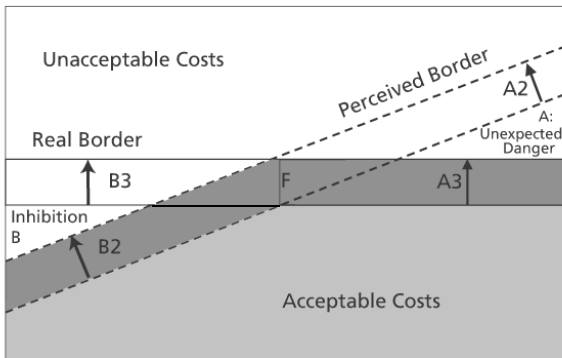


sequences. The darker gray area, then, is really the only political space that is truly "available" to the activist. Space A is too dangerous, and space B has been eliminated in the activist's own mind.

Accompaniment expands this available space by pushing both the "real" and "perceived" borders upwards (see figure 8). The actions in the dark gray shaded area are now available to the activists, but for a variety of reasons. Actions in B2, for instance, were not dangerous in the first place: The activist has simply overcome internalized inhibitions. Accompaniment in this case functions as encouragement and not protection. Actions in A3 are now safer, but since the activists never saw them as unacceptably dangerous the accompaniment here is serving as pure protection, not encouragement. In area F both encouragement and protection are acting together: The activist is encouraged to take new action that was previously too dangerous and is now protected.

Activist's Political Space; reality and perception

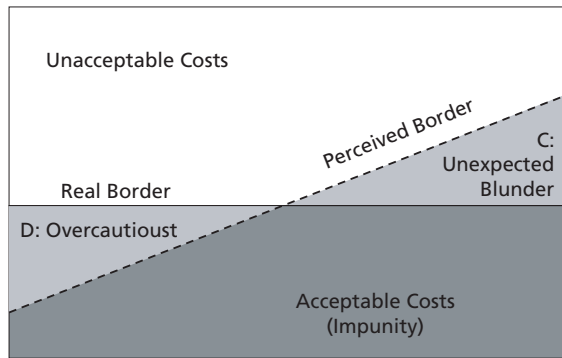
**FIGURE 8**



There is still fear: Area B still exists with accompaniment. In fact, area B3 consists of additional actions that are now relatively safe, but the activist still does not trust in this safety. Finally, area A2 represents the accompaniment volunteer's nightmare: The activist believes these actions to be safer now, but in fact they are not. The activist may walk confidently into danger because of the encouraging international presence.

Aggressor's Political Space: Reality and Perception

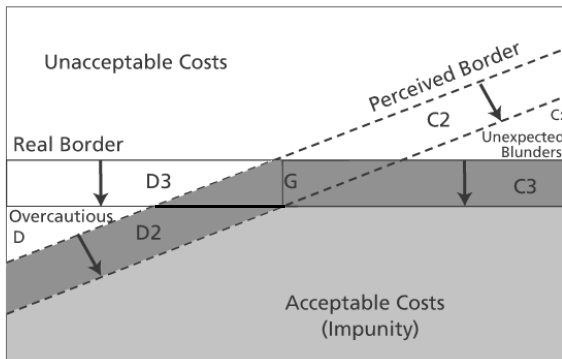
**FIGURE 9**



The aggressor faces many different types of consequences for repressive action. Some are local, such as increased unrest if the aggressor is a state, or increased group loyalty or solidarity among the victims. International pressure is just one factor. Other perceived benefits might outweigh the costs. Getting rid of a troublesome activist, for instance, might seem worth a short-term embarrassment. Thus, "unacceptable costs," refers to the net effect of all these factors. Again in figure 9, only the actions in the darker gray area are truly available "impunity space."

Aggressor's Repressive Space & Effect of Accompaniment

**FIGURE 10**



Protective accompaniment attempts to deter violence and shrink this space (see figure 10) by moving both lines downward, eliminating the dark gray zone from the available space for repressive action. In the case of the activist, we distinguished between protection and encouragement; with the aggressor we speak of discouragement and deterrence. The aggressor is discouraged from acting in area D2, even though the real costs are acceptable. He overestimates the power of accompaniment and becomes even more overcautious. In area G we come the closest to real deterrence: The accompaniment has raised the costs of repression; the aggressor recognizes this and holds back.



Sometimes, accompaniment helps the aggressor avoid mistakes. Thus, actions in area C2 are blunders with or without accompaniment, but the aggressor did not recognize them as such until the accompaniment was present. While discouraging the aggressor's "mistake," accompaniment is protecting the intended target. From the standpoint of the activist, after all, repression by mistake is no less damaging.

Finally, returning to figure 10, the aggressor might commit a repressive act (area C3), and suffer unacceptable consequences because of accompaniment. In the immediate event, accompaniment has failed to deter, but over the course of time, such events should change the aggressor's perception of the available space. If he learns from his mistakes, the "perceived" line should move closer to the real line. The accompaniment thus discourages future aggression. And the more severe the political cost, the greater the credibility and success of future accompaniment.

### **Volunteers building a global movement**

PBI encourages volunteers from all over the world to get actively involved in peace and human rights work. The organization has chapters in 15 countries doing outreach, recruiting volunteers and building networks of political pressure in each of their countries. Eighty or so people at any given time spend a year or more working on PBI teams in conflict zones in urban and rural areas. These volunteers are from many countries and of many ages (though they are all at least 25 years old).



Mexico City sub-team, 2003.

On a given day in the life of a PBI accompaniment volunteer, he or she might spend time meeting with a human rights defender to discuss risks and plans for future accompaniment, or escorting them to a meeting or on a trip or patiently sitting and waiting outside an office while the activists are doing their daily routine. The volunteer might have a meeting with representatives from the military, the government, the diplomatic community or other NGOs in the country.

*For me it was enacting a dream or a vision. I had thought for a number of years doing accompaniment work would be the highest expression of solidarity with other people. To potentially put yourself at risk so another person could continue to their human rights work... doing that was enacting a dream and that's a pretty powerful thing to do. The whole time there was some part of me that was just incredibly content and happy about being there despite the challenges and difficulties I encountered. —John Krone, Mexico project volunteer).*

*I now have a more comprehensive worldview, an increased confidence in my ability to effect change at the local and global level, several long-term friendships and a much better awareness of what it means to be a human rights lawyer in a developing country. I have deep admiration for people who are putting their lives on the line for human rights in Colombia. As well, my time with PBI showed me what a grassroots human rights organization can do to further the struggle for global human rights in a way that is not demeaning—by working with the people instead of on their behalf. —Sean Arthurs, Colombia project volunteer*

*The appreciation of the volunteers is unanimous, in particular their work capacity, their availability, their discretion and ability to adapt to difficult work and living conditions and their respectful attitude towards the organizations and communities they accompany. —External evaluation 2002<sup>3</sup>*

He or she might spend it involved in an emergency activation of the organization's international support network. Or it might be a day for writing reports, taking care of administrative duties or cleaning the house.

### **TRAINING FOR ACCOMPANIMENT**

PBI and other accompaniment organizations have been training volunteers for this service for over 20 years, and a variety of models have been developed. PBI's trainings are highly participatory: Volunteers go through a series of exercises and role-playing exercises to help them visualize the challenge they are considering and to help trainers gauge their preparedness. These trainings consider such criteria as commitment to nonviolence and human rights, capacity for intensive political analysis, understanding of the country of the project, cautious judgment, patience and humility, ability to work in a team under high stress, and more.

More detail on the criteria for selection of volunteers for different PBI projects can be found on the organization's website, [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org).

Training for Change, a Philadelphia-based NGO created by veteran trainer George Lakey, has developed a comprehensive manual on training for this kind of service, encompassing a variety of techniques developed over the years. The manual draws from a wide variety of training experiences, including some techniques from PBI trainings. It is a highly recommended resource for those considering training for accompaniment work: *Opening Space for Democracy: Third-Party Nonviolent Intervention. Curriculum and Trainers Manual*, by Daniel Hunter and George Lakey, available from Training for Change, [peacelearn@igc.org](mailto:peacelearn@igc.org). Website: [www.TrainingForChange.org](http://www.TrainingForChange.org).

The Guatemala Accompaniment Program of NISGUA (described below) has also produced a publicly available manual for accompaniers which has many useful elements for understanding the preparation process. It can be found at [www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org).

### COMING HOME

Each volunteer comes home with a story to tell and often with an intense drive to continue serving the cause of human rights. They may be driven to follow the situations of the groups they had the privilege to accompany. After doing accompaniment, you can no longer see human rights abuses as far away statistics: Those people are your friends and they have given you something deeply important in your life.

Returned volunteers often get more deeply involved in working in their own communities for justice, peace and human rights. Each of them is a resource in his or her own community, a person with a unique first-hand experience from which others can learn and be inspired. In fact, it is quite common for returned accompaniment volunteers to make substantial changes in their life plans and careers in order to sustain greater life-long commitment to service.

The expansion of a global movement for peace and human rights is an explicit piece of the accompaniment tactic. The protection and encouragement that local activists can get from accompaniment is directly correlated to the strength of the global network of solidarity that cares about them. Accompaniment volunteers not only represent this network on the ground—they also strengthen it when they get home.



The loneliness of a typical day's accompaniment.

*This was one of the most difficult, challenging and rewarding experiences in my life – and this remains true still to this day. —Peter Leblanc, USA volunteer in Sri Lanka and Indonesia.*

*In general it was one of the best things I have ever done despite some of the trials and tribulations I faced. Doing PBI in Colombia was a turning point for me and helped me to decide to go to law school. —Kelli Corrigan, Canadian volunteer in Colombia.*

*One of the highlights was during those moments when I could chat and connect on a real human level with the people I was accompanying and send a strong statement by my presence that I respected them and their work. I respected them as conscious human beings who were trying to make the world a better place. —John Krone, volunteer in Mexico.*





## Discussion: Factors affecting the protection function

Accompaniment cannot protect a targeted person in all situations. There are certain prerequisites and conditions that affect the potential protective impact.

First of all, there must be a *clear source of threat*. You cannot strategize or leverage pressure on decision makers behind abuses unless you know whom to target. And this is not always so simple. Threats are often anonymous. Conflict dynamics can be complex, with more than two or three violent parties. An organization or activist may have enemies in more than one place. There is often a tendency to oversimplify conflicts, assuming that one party is always the bad guy, and anonymous threats can be too easily attributed to the party that appears to be most likely. Or, there are cases where people operating within highly

charged political situations might nevertheless be receiving threats that are not explicitly politically motivated. Communities sometimes have long-standing conflicts that may even precede the wars around them. An accompaniment organization needs to have a highly developed capacity for conflict analysis and a trustworthy network of advisors who know the history of the conflicts around them and can help parse out the sources of threats.

It is possible, of course, to choose to operate in situations where you cannot get enough information about the threats. An organization might take a calculated risk, hoping that whoever is responsible will be less likely to attack in the presence of witnesses. This does certainly happen, in part because it is both psychologically and politically extremely difficult to say no to a person or group in need. Under such circumstances, though, an organization should have clear criteria for acceptable security risks and uncertainty levels. It is also essential to be transparent with the groups being accompanied: If you are going in only on hope and commitment with insufficient understanding of the threats, this should temper claims of protection.

Assuming, however, that you can identify the source with a reasonable level of certainty, you next need to be sure that the leadership making decisions about these threats or abuses has some sensitivity to international pressure, and you need to try to gauge *how much*. There is almost always *some* sensitivity, and there is never *total* sensitivity. Even the most vicious and apparently autonomous armed actor in today's world is dependent on some kind of external support or alliance, be it political, military or economic. And the most apparently sensitive government in the world can have enemies it is willing to suffer serious political costs to get rid of. Gauging this sensitivity requires not only a good domestic analysis of the conflict, but also a capacity for analyzing transnational connections and external points of leverage.

If you identify a source of threat and sensitivity to pressure, the next question is: *Does your accompaniment organization have the capacity to leverage such pressure? And can you be sure that the abusing party knows that you can do it?* This is where having a strong network of high-level contacts on both international and national levels is quite crucial. Having contacts and allies in governments internationally gives an accompaniment organization the capacity to create pressure on a high level. Having contacts (even unfriendly ones) inside the government and military on the ground ensures that they know that your organization has this leverage. By extension, the protection provided by accompaniment increases the more the organization is able to make its presence and function known all the way down the chain of command from decision maker to perpetrator.

When U.S. PBI volunteer Phil Pardi was arrested along with Salvadoran activists Gloria and Ernesto Zamora in August 1991, within a few hours he got a visit from the U.S. Embassy. According to Phil: *Actually the first thing he said to me was, "Well, Phil, you're very popular, you ever think about running for the mayor of Cambridge, Massachusetts? I think half the town of Cambridge has probably called me." He was also asking me why the people who were calling him knew Ernesto and Gloria. That told me that the phone calls and the faxes were also about Ernesto and Gloria. This embassy guy just wanted to get me out of there. He kept saying, "Well, Phil, you're just in the wrong place at the wrong time." And I kept saying, "No, I was in the right place at the right time." But he just didn't get it.* (Cited from *Unarmed Bodyguards*, p 181)



Suraya Kamaruddin, from Flower Aceh is accompanied to the airport. Suraya was one of the most visible activists in Asia confronting violence against women. She was extremely threatened in Aceh, Indonesia, and asked for PBI accompaniment whenever she traveled anywhere in Indonesia.



## Factors affecting the encouragement function

No activist or group is going to want accompaniment unless he or she is already committed to risking some level of public organizing. If that choice has already been made, then in order to benefit from the potential confidence-boost of accompaniment, the activist or group needs to fully understand how accompaniment works. It is vital that those who are accompanied recognize the power of accompaniment to protect them, but that they *don't overestimate it!* The encouraging impact of accompaniment must be realistic—if not it can provoke excessive risk-taking and backfire.

An accompaniment organization also needs to take cultural or social factors into account. There may be taboos or social costs associated with proximity to foreigners in certain situations. There may be situations where the gender of the volunteer or the accompanied person affects whether the accompaniment will create a situation of trust or one of discomfort. Accompaniment volunteers need a high degree of cultural sensitivity.

*Trust* is the magic word in situations of conflict and insecurity. Threatened groups function with high levels of fear and suspicion. They may be facing governments who infiltrate and spy on them. Suspicion is a rational consequence of war and repression. Your local partners must not only want the accompaniment, they need to believe that your organization and the individuals in it are trustworthy. Gaining people's trust often first happens through a step-by-step process of word-of-mouth contact: Individuals and groups are more willing to start trusting you if they know that someone else they trust also trusts you. So it is quite important to move slowly and make contacts with organizations through people and groups you already have good relationships with.

Accompaniment volunteers have to sustain that trust by showing a high degree of self-discipline, sensitivity and humility. Loose lips sink ships, the saying goes. An accompaniment organization with volunteers who are nosy, rash, unable to maintain in confidence what they overhear or too intrusive into the lives or politics of those they accompany, will not be trusted. And *if you are not sufficiently trusted, there is no encouraging impact*. On the contrary, mistrust causes a heightened sense of insecurity.

Intensive accompaniment is personally and socially stressful for threatened people. It is an intrusion in their lives. Accompaniment volunteers should not expect close friendships with those they accompany. They should not expect to be included in their social or political life. It may happen. But such inclusion may also be a serious burden to the accompanied activist, adding stress and diminishing the empowering impact of the presence.

## Factors affecting the objective of building the movement

The strength of an organization's global network is a direct factor in the level of protection and solidarity it can offer, and an accompaniment organization needs to make choices based on a long-term goal of strengthening that network.

But the multiple objectives of accompaniment can make these choices difficult. Consider for instance the selection of volunteers. One set of criteria might maximize the service that can be provided "on the ground": things like self-discipline over curiosity and risk-taking, patience, humility, capacity to go with the flow of the decisions of those you accompany, a high level of political analysis, a smooth capacity to work in a team under stress. When you look at what might maximize the "movement-building" objective for volunteers upon their return, there are additional criteria: initiative to do local organizing, outgoing capacity to publicize the work, public speaking, media skills, fundraising skills, etc. If you are lucky, you find a match for all these criteria in each volunteer. But the practical reality is that every organization faces a limited recruitment pool and must make hard choices. If you don't pay enough attention to on-the-ground skills, costly and dangerous mistakes may be made that will affect people's immediate safety as well as the longer-term reputation of the organization. And if you don't pay enough attention to recruiting and developing movement-building skills, your organization will lose crucial opportunities to grow and strengthen its international protective network of support.

Another dilemma has to do with the relationship between the scale of a presence—the number of volunteers—and the selection criteria. There is always a desire to provide a high quality service by setting the strictest possible selection criteria for field workers and volunteers. But the impact on building a global movement is increased if there are more field staff passing through a project and returning home to share their experience and participate in movement-building and advocacy.

Similarly, the same quality-of-service pressure tends to encourage longer stays in the field by volunteers. Longer stays take advantage of accumulated experience and offer clients greater comfort and familiarity with the volunteers. But with shorter stays, more field volunteers would be returning home to do advocacy and movement-building. If a project sustains 20 people on the ground, the number of volunteers returning home to do movement-building is inversely proportional to the length of stay. Some organizations have chosen to address this dilemma by having long-term teams while also allowing for the possibility of much shorter volunteer stays (of a few months or less), or by organizing a program of "delegations" whereby many people can spend short stays of two or three



weeks in the field, gaining a brief experience that can still provide an important resource for building grassroots support when they return home.

The reason this kind of work has such powerful movement-building potential is because the field experience changes people's lives, and it is very inspiring to hear about it. People with significant accompaniment experience are "experts," but also personal models that others admire. They have a lot to offer.

### Considering accompaniment in a new setting

PBI is constantly receiving and exploring new requests for accompaniment. For instance, in 2004 the organization is sending an exploratory team to the conflict in Nepal, responding to calls from local NGOs there. Based on lessons learned from its many projects over the years, PBI has developed explicit criteria and procedures for diagnosing requests and deciding whether to set up new projects.

Protective accompaniment is also being used widely now by other NGOs (see box next page). Each of these organizations has their own identity and mandate, different from PBI's, and they adapt the accompaniment into their broader missions.

Consider a country you know something about that is facing conflict or systemic human rights abuse. Do you think it would be possible to mount an effective program in protective accompaniment there? Such a diagnosis involves a complex list of questions, including:

- Would local activists need and appreciate the presence? Do they have other means of protection? Are they isolated and in need of solidarity?
- What are the attitudes of the abusers toward international presence?
- Are abusers susceptible to international pressure?
- How can you mount that pressure? Who has leverage with abusers?
- Can you get into the country? Will you be thrown out?
- Is the international community interested in the situation? Would funds be available? Would personnel be willing to take the risk? Would governments respond to crises witnessed by companions?
- What criteria would limit personnel? Language? Culture? Is this prohibitive or surmountable?
- What cultural factors need to be considered in this country?



PBI monitoring a demonstration in Indonesia.

### LARGE-SCALE INSTITUTIONS: "PRESENCE AS PROTECTION"

What PBI's work has demonstrated is that the very fact of being present can have protective power if used correctly. Some successful human rights monitoring operations in UN peace missions have shown this on a larger scale, such as MINUGUA in Guatemala and ONUSAL in El Salvador. Larger-scale efforts might go beyond protection of individuals or groups and actually have a pacifying impact on the dynamics of a conflict. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has overseen large-scale monitoring operations, although it may have much greater potential for such work. Other intergovernmental bodies, such as the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (in Bosnia and Kosovo) or the Organization of American States (in Haiti) have also implemented large unarmed presences. In addition, ad hoc intergovernmental coalitions have set up large monitoring presences, for example in Sri Lanka (Sri Lanka Monitoring Mission), Palestine (Temporary International Presence in Hebron) and the Joint Monitoring Mission in the Nuba Mountains, Sudan.<sup>4</sup>

The Geneva-based Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue is an NGO that has negotiated cease-fires in armed conflicts and sometimes overseen monitoring operations. CHD is starting a systematic research project on these experiences and planning a long-term advocacy program to persuade major international government organizations to significantly increase their projection of unarmed monitoring operations into conflict zones as a means of protecting civilians.<sup>6</sup>

## **“PRESENCE AS PROTECTION” WITHIN OTHER KINDS OF FIELD MISSIONS**

It is also possible to integrate the protective and encouraging functions of accompaniment into other kinds of organizational work in conflict zones. Humanitarian relief operations, international medical organizations, educational workers, representatives of inter-governmental agencies and religious workers are all present in zones of conflict. Their primary mission may not be protection as such but very often their mandate might allow for a protection function, or they may find themselves forced into security situations in which protection of local people is their paramount challenge.

Many other groups can also provide protection by their presence, even while carrying out other tasks. But the

impact of such a presence, both in terms of protection and encouragement, can be amplified if these organizations take conscious steps to do so.

For instance, a relief or development operation may serve a certain sector of the population. Threatened civil society groups may not be their direct partners, yet they will often be in close proximity to such groups. If such international groups make the effort to stay aware of the political threats facing various groups around them, they can go out of their way to make contact now and then with these threatened groups and individuals, offering what solidarity they can. They can pass information to the outside world about these situations of danger and put local groups in contact with potential supporters outside the conflict.

### **Some Other Accompaniment Projects**

The *Guatemala Accompaniment Project* is fielded by NISGUA (the National Organization in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala, Washington, D.C.). The accompaniment their eight to ten volunteers offer is part of a broader advocacy mandate. NISGUA develops “sister communities” in North America who sponsor volunteers to live in their counterpart community in Guatemala, focusing on communities of returned refugees and those that are actively pursuing genocide cases against former military leaders. NISGUA is actively involved in offering political and other support for the political initiatives of these communities, and the sister community relationships strengthen the NISGUA constituency for political lobbying of the U.S. government to change its policies with respect to Guatemala.

The *Nonviolent Peace Force* sent a team of 11 volunteers to Sri Lanka in 2003, with hopes to expand. They are accompanying villages in all regions of the country during a delicate ceasefire and negotiation process between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam and the Sri Lankan Government. This is the Peace Force’s first field presence, but they have created a broad network of support around the world for the ambitious long-range goal of creating the capacity to field multiple large-scale nonviolent field missions around the world.

The Peace Force has only been in the field a short time, but they spent years in preparation before launching their Sri Lanka pilot project, studying the lessons of other accompaniment groups to try to maximize the protection and encouragement impact while avoiding as much as possible the learning-curve pitfalls that can hurt any first effort. The Peace Force is also approaching the global movement-building objective in a different way than previous accompaniment initiatives: They have created a modified coalition structure—an organizational membership model through which dozens of organizations around the world from both northern and southern countries can “join” their organization. Member organizations are expected to offer political support, recruitment and resources, and can participate in Peace Force decision-making processes.

The *Christian Peacemaker Teams*, a U.S.-based project of the Mennonite, Brethren, and Quaker churches, has had a long-term presence of volunteers in Hebron, Palestine, since the mid-1990s<sup>5</sup>. Volunteers do school accompaniment, they document the human rights situation, and they carry out nonviolence trainings. They make regular visits to Palestinian families involved in the Campaign for Secure Dwellings, and offer solidarity to victims of home demolitions. CPT joins with Palestinian and Israeli peace groups to develop action campaigns that expose the human reality of the Israeli occupation. CPT’s accompaniment is spiritually-based and also involves creating inter-religious solidarity among Christians, Muslims and Jews.

The *Ecumenical Accompaniment Project in Palestine and Israel* is a project of the Geneva-based World Council of Churches, hosted by Christian and Orthodox Palestinian churches. EAPPI is part of broader program of solidarity and global advocacy of the World Council focused on the objective of ending the occupation. Since starting in August 2002, EAPPI has sent over 60 accompaniers from 30 churches in eight countries. As of November 2003, there were 22 EAPPI accompaniers on the ground in Palestine.

*An important part of accompanying does not involve so much action, but rather being present in a community. Helping, protecting people just by being present at checkpoints, in communities touched by settlers violence and at gates on the separation wall. —EAPPI volunteer.*



Most international operations in a conflict zone also have some level of contact with authorities, the military or other armed groups. Often this contact is for the purpose of securing access or passage. At other times such contact is unplanned, such as at roadblocks and the like. In any case, all international staff of groups working in conflict zones could benefit from some training in political sensitivity and diplomacy in order to make the most of such contacts with potentially abusive parties. Those who commit human rights abuse need to be reminded frequently that the international community is paying attention to their behavior. Such reminders can be polite, they can be indirect, they can come in many forms. Every organization talking to a local commander or thug has the opportunity not only to get agreement to get their particular resources through to their projects, but also to send other more subtle messages that will sustain awareness on the part of the abusers that these international groups are also concerned about all the civilians around them, and not merely their direct partners.

If more international organizations working in conflict zones add the objective of civilian protection to their mandates, other opportunities will arise for maximizing the protective impact of their presence. There are often people in organizations on the ground who want to take more deliberate steps to respond to political threats against civilians around them, but feel that their institutional mandate prevents them from doing anything so “political.” The more these institutions embrace the uncertainty and risk of working in conflict zones, and the moral necessity of a protection commitment, the more such committed staff-people will be able to take useful steps to help local groups in peril—including groups who may not be their direct partners.

Accompaniment groups and others who already have experience trying to implement a protection mandate may be able to offer training to help other groups’ personnel develop the necessary habits and discourse to maximize the protective impact of their important presence on the ground.

## Conclusion

New conflicts continue to erupt, and new requests for accompaniment arise all over the world. But despite the rapid growth of the human rights movement in recent decades, most new accompaniment requests go unanswered. The international community has thus far been unable to effectively marshal the necessary resources and commitment to meet the needs.

Accompaniment extends the boundaries of what is known as the international community beyond governments, beyond the UN, beyond the established humanitarian agencies. Accompaniment has helped connect grassroots efforts for justice and human rights around the world with these larger international structures. The volunteers are a living bridge between threatened local activists and the outside world and also between their own home communities and the reality of the global struggle for peace and human rights.

These links may help overcome the seemingly impossible challenge of human rights protection. In the final analysis, the international community’s response to human rights abuses is not a question of resources but one of hope and empowerment. Accompaniment volunteers experience the rare privilege of standing at the side of some of the world’s most courageous and committed activists. This courage injects immeasurable energy into the international community’s efforts.

A request for human rights protection should never fall on deaf ears. The international community needs to redefine what is possible. We can take the lead from these threatened activists who are asking for support. They do the impossible every day.

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*Nonviolent Intervention Across Borders: A Recurrent Vision*, ed. Yeshua Moser-Phuangsuwan and Thomas Weber. Univ. of Hawaii, Honolulu, HI, USA, 2000.

*Opening Space for Democracy: Third-Party Nonviolent Intervention. Curriculum and Trainers Manual*, by Daniel Hunter and George Lakey, Training for Change, Philadelphia, PA. [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org).

"Unarmed Monitoring and Human Rights Field Presences: Civilian Protection and Conflict Prevention," Liam Mahony, August, 2003, *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, at [www.jha.ac](http://www.jha.ac).

"In Company of Fear," 60-minute video, produced by Ark Films, Vancouver, Canada. Available from PBI-USA.

## Organizational Websites

Peace Brigades International: [www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org). Addresses for each national chapter also can be found on this website.

Nonviolent Peace Force: [www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org](http://www.nonviolentpeaceforce.org)

Ecumenical Accompaniment Project in Palestine and Israel: [www.eappi.org](http://www.eappi.org)

Christian Peacemaker Teams: [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)

Guatemala Accompaniment Project: [www.nisgua.org](http://www.nisgua.org)

Training for Change: [www.trainingforchange.org](http://www.trainingforchange.org)

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## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> For simplicity we will use the short-hand term "volunteer" when referring to the personnel doing accompaniment, as the majority of organizations providing accompaniment do so with volunteers. The tactic could of course also be carried out by paid personnel, so this terminology should not be considered exclusive of that option.

<sup>2</sup> The analysis of this section is drawn from *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*, Luis Enrique Eguren and Liam Mahony, Kumarian Press, 1997.

<sup>3</sup> From a 2001 external evaluation of PBI's Colombia Project by Cristine Iparraguirre and Javier Aguilar.

<sup>4</sup> CPT also managed long-term projects in Haiti, starting in 1993, and currently sustains a presence in Colombia and Iraq as well. They have also implemented shorter-term projects and delegations in Chechnya and other conflicts.

<sup>5</sup> For more background on this idea, see Liam Mahony, "Unarmed Monitoring and Human Rights Field Presences: Civilian Protection and Conflict Prevention," August 2003, in the *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, at [www.jha.ac](http://www.jha.ac), academic publications.

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