



## Peace Brigades International/USA

Promoting Nonviolence and Defending Human Rights  
Since 1981

[www.peacebrigades.org](http://www.peacebrigades.org)

February 2008

### *The Struggle for Human Rights in Nepal*



PBI Volunteer Frauke Ricking (Germany) during an accompaniment with PBI-partner Advocacy Forum in Baglung, Nepal.

This is a special appeal for you to help the PBI Nepal team and their courageous partner organizations with a tax-deductible contribution. Your donation will be used to keep the PBI office/house open, pay the small monthly stipends of five field volunteers, cover medical costs, purchase satellite phones for the team, build diplomatic relations in the capital of Katmandu and maintain contact with PBI's 15 offices around the world. Make checks payable to PBI-USA and send them to 1326 9th St, NW Washington, DC 20001, earmarked for the Nepal team. Here's why....

Nepal has been the scene of a brutal 10 year civil war, leaving more than 13,000 people dead and resulting in the largest number of new cases of forced "disappearances" in the world.\* Despite halting progress in the official peace process, human rights abuses are wide-spread and the people of Nepal have very few civil or political rights left. Human rights monitors have documented extrajudicial killings, illegal detentions, and disappearances by the Royal Nepalese Army (RNA), while the Maoists engage in extortion, murder, forced displacement of civilians,

and abductions. The court system is corrupt and subject to political pressure.\* Human rights activists in Nepal have been targeted for arbitrary detention, outright assassinations, and torture.

Even in such a hostile context, there are many local initiatives for the promotion and defense of human rights. Solutions to the conflict are being proposed by civil society activists, and many efforts to create a more just and participatory society are being implemented. However, threats to Nepali civil society leaders by armed actors, the lack of protection measures by the Nepali state, and the high level of impunity have led to a serious reduction in the space for democratic action.

In 2006, PBI launched the Nepal Project to protect courageous Nepali individuals in their struggle to re-establish peace, justice, and equality in Nepal's political and social institutions. The Project was established only after a careful, two year exploration and assessment. The first PBI team in the capitol city won legal status with the government and strengthened our networking with Nepali organizations, the diplomatic community, international groups, and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Nepal.

There are now five PBI field volunteers, but PBI-Nepal receives more requests for accompaniment in remote rural areas than we can accept. More and more threatened human rights defenders neglected by the official peace process continue to request our presence. After con-

### **What is PBI?**

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is a non-governmental organization which protects human rights and promotes the nonviolent transformation of conflicts. When invited, we send teams of volunteers into areas of repression and conflict.

The volunteers accompany human rights defenders, their organizations and others threatened by political violence. Perpetrators of human rights abuses usually do not want the world to witness their actions. The presence of volunteers backed by a political support network helps to deter violence.

We create space for local activists to work for social justice and human rights. PBI's volunteers are currently working in Guatemala, Mexico, Colombia, Nepal, and Indonesia.



PBI-Nepal volunteer Lucy Carver (UK) with a member of Nepali human rights organization INSEC during a 2006 protest in Kathmandu.

sulting with communities in Nepalgunj, Surkhet, Kanchanpur, Danghadi, Bardia and Kapilvastu, we plan to open a field office in western Nepal. Do what you can to help these courageous individuals by sending earmarked contributions to PBI-USA. Thank you!

\* "Human Rights Overview: Nepal" Human Rights Watch, 2006.

# Longest Serving PBI Field Volunteer Maripaz Gallardo!

An Interview Across three Conflicts conducted by Barbara Wien

Maripaz Gallardo has a deep and rich experience of protecting human rights defenders with Peace Brigades International. Over the last eight years she has provided “nonviolent protective accompaniment” in three countries, Colombia, Mexico and Guatemala, making her one of the longest-serving field volunteers in our history. Since 2000, when Maripaz first arrived on the team in Barranca-bermeja, Colombia, she has courageously protected the lives of countless trade union activists, mothers of the disappeared, environmental workers, lawyers, and democracy advocates.

Maripaz recently spoke with PBI-USA Co-Director Barbara Wien to share her experiences as a field volunteer. She remembers, “The PBI Colombia Project had only been established five years earlier when I arrived, but the structure was already clearly defined and well-organized. This was important, because the threats and risk levels were very high. Paramilitary forces launched incursions into Barranca-bermeja in December 2000. Many people were harmed or killed.” During her time in Colombia, she worked to protect three organizations: ASFADDES, OFP and CREDHOS.

Next, Maripaz served on the PBI Mexico Project from February 2001 to February 2002. She said, “The Project was new and undefined, but very interesting. We had no accompaniments yet. We were setting up the Project, establishing relationships in the capital city, and trying to decide which petitions to accept. There was a feeling of great hope across the country because Vicente Fox had just been elected President. The PBI team was very excited. But then the courageous human rights lawyer, Digna Ocha, was assassinated in her office in Mexico City.”

Her first assignment involved protecting poor families who were protesting corruption and terrible living conditions—including a lack of water and electricity—in a



Maripaz on an accompaniment in San Marcos.

barrio in Acapulco, Guerrero. “Freedom was being strangled and the political space for these activists was closing. We helped to keep



PBI Volunteers Maripaz Gallardo (left) and Katia Aeby (right) during an accompaniment with Colectivo Madre Selva in San Marcos.

their breathing space alive. PBI volunteers were harassed going in and out of the barrio. We felt that we may be causing more problems for the residents, so we stationed ourselves outside the boundaries,” Maripaz told the USA staff recently. She continued, “There were very interesting debates within the community about how to address their conditions. “ The situation was dire, as anyone trying to improve the community was silenced. This happened to one of the fathers in the barrio, who had been killed for speaking out three years earlier, prior to PBI establishing a presence there.

Currently Maripaz serves in Guatemala with PBI, where she has seen escalating violence and impunity. The “escuadrones de muerte” or death squads from the 1980s and 1990s are underground, but still operating, and homelessness and poverty are endemic. Maripaz told Barbara, “The conditions of the children seem far worse to me in Guatemala than in Colombia and Mexico. Poverty is more widespread and generalized.”

In retrospect, Maripaz says that, “The most important thing in my life has been staying, living and working with the human rights defenders. They are so strong. My experience with PBI has been very, very difficult at times. We live through hard moments and situations.” Despite the danger and hardship, Maripaz laughs when asked if she was every afraid to serve on a PBI team. Peace Brigades International feels honored to have Maripaz as a field volunteer for so long. Thank you, Maripaz, for your commitment and eight years of service!

# *PBI, Coming to a Town Near You!*

This summer Peace Brigades completed its most ambitious speaking tour yet, with two returning field volunteers visiting twelve cities in eight states over a six week period. Returning Mexico Project volunteer Jamie Wick and returning Colombia Project volunteer Liza Smith presented PBI to over a thousand people in a variety of mediums, including peace groups, churches, universities, charitable foundations, Congressional offices, the State Department, and the United Nations. Their tireless efforts raised our profile in the U.S. and garnered much-needed support for our hardworking field teams overseas. We are extremely grateful to the dedicated PBI hosts, organizers, friends, family, and staff who pitched in to make the tour a success, and also thankful to the hundreds of participants who took time out of their busy lives to learn about Peace Brigades and join our efforts to transform violent conflict around the world.

Liza's and Jamie's hard work brought hundreds of new members into the PBI community, many of whom are young students who will shape the future of non-violence movements around the world. Their success underscored the need for more outreach and publicity from PBI-USA, as we strive to generate more political support, funding, and future volunteers for the PBI Projects.

In Liza Smith's words:



PBI volunteer Liza Smith sang several original songs about her experience in Colombia at the Church Farm School in PA.

"I was happy to be talking about Peace Brigades, an organization that I feel is not well-known and unfairly so -- PBI does such serious, consistent work and has a real, long-term commitment to human rights. There are many other organizations that have a huge profile but don't have the extremely tangible results of which PBI can

boast. Most of the people who came to an event had never heard of PBI and were very impressed that we manage to protect people who are threatened, with non-violent means. It



Returning PBI volunteers Jamie Wick (left) and Liza Smith (right) present Peace Brigades at a Church Farm School in Pennsylvania.

also felt very important to be talking about what is really happening [in Colombia and Mexico] and especially that there are very courageous, committed people who are doing human rights work and who need the international communities' solidarity and support. Although I do feel exhausted and worn out, I'm very glad that I did it and hope that it was a contribution to PBI USA's work."

As we embark on our next ambitious project --outlining PBI-USA's new strategic plan -- we hope to build on Liza's and Jamie's momentum by cultivating our capacity for public speaking and expanding our grassroots emergency response network (ERN). We invite you to become a part of this new vision by bringing PBI into your community, for speaking events at your school or by hosting a PBI party at your home or office. There are endless opportunities for collaboration, so please help us expand by sending your thoughts, ideas, and invitations! We will be sure to let you know when a PBI volunteer will be coming to a town near you. Send us an email!

**Wish to host a house party?  
Want to help expand PBI?  
Interested in our future  
volunteer speaking tours?  
Contact [info@pbiousa.org](mailto:info@pbiousa.org) or  
[andrew@pbiousa.org](mailto:andrew@pbiousa.org)  
202-232-0142 (phone)  
202-231-0143 (fax)**

# Where Peace B



PBI Mexico volunteer Jamie Wick (US) accompanies Women Ecologists of the Sierra de Petatlan.

**Mexico** PBI has provided protective accompaniment in Mexico since 1999. The Mexico Project currently maintains six field volunteers in the state of Guerrero in addition to a small office in Mexico City. Our team in Guerrero protects five human rights organizations working on impunity, indigenous rights, and environmental protection. The team walks side-by-side with threatened individuals, makes periodic visits to conflict zones, distributes information, and maintains communication with government officials and military authorities, churches, the diplomatic community, and international organizations to promote international protection. The Mexico Project always works in response to local requests and never tries to supplant local initiatives for human rights, but rather tries to support political freedom so Mexicans can work on their own behalf.

Our first protective accompaniment began in Guatemala in 1983, making the Guatemala Project PBI's oldest.

## Guatemala

In 1999, 3 years after the historic Peace Accords were signed, PBI decided to close the Project after a long evaluation concluded that the situation had improved sufficiently for the people we accompany. But by 2003, PBI decided to reopen the Guatemala Project due to the deteriorating human rights situation. As of January 2008, the Guatemala team was comprised of field volunteers from eight countries, and human rights defenders continue to face grave security risks. According to Amnesty International's 2007 Annual Report: "Threats, attacks, and intimidation against human rights defenders, in particular those focusing on economic, social and cultural rights, [have] intensified." The PBI team is analyzing in great detail the many requests for protection they receive.



A Guatemalan woman weeps by the remains of her relative following an exhumation of clandestine graves with PBI-partner group CONAVIGUA.

The Guatemala Project recently published a report, "Ten Years Without War...Waiting for Peace." Fifty people from civil society organizations, the media and the diplomatic corps attended the report launch.



## Voices Around the

*"Threats, risks and challenges are still present for us and we need PBI to be with us. The work of human rights organizations in Nepal is still very important. PBI strengthens human rights defenders so we can claim the rights of citizens, and creates moral pressure on the perpetrators. The PBI volunteers don't intervene or do our work, rather they give us international moral support."*

- Nepali Human Rights Lawyer,

*"We travel in bulletproof cars, we live in houses that have been bulletproofed, live in houses that have been bulletproofed. We don't go to public events where because we choose to defend victims of human rights violations. Eduardo Umana Mendoza, was a human rights defender. Other colleagues have had to go to prison. This is why we requested the international observation of Peace Accords."*

- Eduardo Umana Mendoza

# Brigades Works

PBI has been working in Colombia since 1994, and our field teams currently operate in Bogota, Uraba Barrancabermeja, and Medellin. To counter the pattern of threats, harassment, and killings that obstruct the work of Colombian human rights activists, PBI provides protective accompaniment to eleven organizations, two displaced communities, and certain high-profile individuals who promote human rights. The PBI Colombia team also raises awareness of human rights conditions with Colombian state authorities and the international community, in addition to exposing the need for psycho-social support, security, and protection for local NGOs. Our new Colombia Project Representative in Washington DC, Alice Garside, advances advocacy and dialogue with the policy makers in the United States.

## Colombia



PBI-Colombia volunteer Yvonne Berner (Germany) monitors an event organized by the Movement of Victims of State Crimes.



**Indonesia** PBI began working in Indonesia in 1999, and the PBI Indonesia Project (IP) currently provides protective accompaniment services, participatory peace education programs and peace workshops to local organizations upon request. This year has underscored the need for a continued presence in Indonesia, with open clashes between unarmed civilians and military forces over land disputes in Java, armed conflicts between the Indonesian military and separatists in Papua, and a number of devastating natural and man-made environmental disasters. The IP works tirelessly to help improve the situation of human rights defenders working in this dangerous political situation, with teams working in Jakarta, Aceh, and Papua. The Project also continues to expand its services for promoting peace in Indonesia by organizing speaking tours of volunteers and Indonesian human rights defenders, capacity-building trainings for local organizations, and conflict transformation workshops throughout the archipelago.

## From the World

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 Carreno, Colombian Lawyer

*"Our presence in the field acts as a visible reminder to potentially violent people that the international community is watching the situation, and that human rights abuses will not be tolerated."*

- Nikki Evans (UK), Former PBI Colombia Volunteer



Participants & facilitators during a PBI conflict transformation workshop, Wamena, Papua.

## Awards & Recognition



PBI Volunteer Helen Woodcock (left) and human rights defender Dominga Vasquez (right) accept the ISHR award.

For over 26 years, Peace Brigades International has been safeguarding human rights around the globe with relatively little recognition from the mainstream media. The delicate political and social contexts in which our field volunteers work prohibit use of the “naming and shaming” campaigns that have helped turn other human rights organizations into household names. But our work is a key reference point for governments and international agencies, including the UN. In 2007 PBI was honored with a number of awards that attest to our success.

The International Service for Human Rights honored the brave partnership between Guatemalan human rights defender Dominga Vasquez and PBI volunteer Helen Woodcock by jointly giving them the “Defense of the Human Rights of Women Award.” Dominga has worked tirelessly for women's and indigenous rights in Guatemala, and her efforts have paid off as she was elected the first female Indigenous Mayor of Solola. As Mayor, Dominga applies Mayan traditional approaches to conflict resolution in order to help bring peace and unity to Guatemala and improve the lives of Guatemalan women. Helen Woodcock spent twelve months in Guatemala as part of a PBI team providing international protective accompaniment to threatened activists such as Dominga.

In October 2007, The Peace and Justice Studies Association (PJSA), a society of university professors, gave PBI-USA Co-Director, Barbara Wien, their “Social Courage Award.” The award is given “for exemplifying courage in building and promoting a culture of peace and non-violence in the face of political pressure and social struggle.”

In November 2007, British citizen Daniel Carey, a PBI volunteer on the Guatemala team, won the UK's Law Society “Solicitor of the Year” Award. The award recognized Daniel's courage and dedication in helping to protect and support a number of key human rights organizations seeking to rectify Guatemala's legislative weaknesses and

strengthen basic principles of human rights and justice. Daniel has described his decision to volunteer in Guatemala as his, “duty to demonstrate solidarity with fellow professionals struggling in states where the rule of law is not observed.”

Human Rights First awarded the prestigious 2007 “Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty” to Colombian human rights defender Ivan Cepeda. Ivan is the founder and spokesman of several human rights organizations including the National Movement for Victims of State Crimes, which consists of more than 200 organizations. Together with other human rights defenders he has participated in an effort to document approximately 40,000 cases of serious human rights violations committed in Colombia since 1966. Through remarkable perseverance he has demonstrated that paramilitary groups committed grievous human rights violations, often in complicity with members of the Colombian armed forces. PBI has been accompanying Ivan since he returned to Colombia after having been in exile numerous years due to threats to his life.

Nepali lawyer Mandira Sharma, Co-Founder of Advocacy Forum, was awarded the prestigious “Human Rights Defender Award” from Human Rights Watch in October 2007. Advocacy Forum (AF) is a leading non-governmental organization working to promote the rule of law and uphold international human rights standards in Nepal. AF actively confronts the culture of impunity by systematically documenting human rights violations, bringing legal cases against perpetrators and monitoring detention centers. PBI has accompanied AF since August of 2006.

Here's hoping that 2008 brings more such successes!



Barbara Wien (right) with Ginny Dorn & Kathleen Kanet who nominated her for the PJSA Social Courage Award.

*“Mandira and Advocacy Forum stand for justice, and bitter experience from around the world shows that peace without justice is illusory.”*

-Sam Zarifi, Asia research director for HRW

Mandira Sharma accepts the Human Rights Defender Award from HRW.



# Indigenous Women Break Their Silence About Rape

On October 13<sup>th</sup> I arrived at Mexico City's Benito Juarez airport to pick up Otilia Eugenio Manuel, Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú, members of the Organization of Indigenous Me'Phaa People (OPIM). Ines, who speaks little Spanish and who has almost never left her home state of Guerrero, and Valentina had just traveled to Washington, D.C. to testify before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). The IACHR is an international body of the Organization of American States (OAS) that meets regularly to investigate individual petitions that allege human rights violations committed by state agents.

Otilia had accompanied the women to translate from their indigenous Me'Phaa to Spanish, and Mario Patrón of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center had accompanied them as their lawyer. Otilia has been continuously threatened and harassed since she publicly denounced the rape of these two women by members of the Mexican Army back in 2002. The rapes allegedly occurred in the indigenous communities where they live. These communities have had a large military presence for many years, especially following the massacre of El Charco, where 11 indigenous Mixteco people were killed following a military operation in 1998. With increasing military presence fueled by the search for drug traffickers and

PBI Mexico volunteer Jamie Wick (US) accompanies Otilia Eugenio Manuel and her children.



armed guerrilla groups, Otilia and other social justice leaders began to organize and denounce the human rights abuses committed by the military in indigenous communities.

Making this trip all the way to Washington to denounce the Mexican Army has been a nerve-racking experience for all involved. Just months before, Ines'



PBI Volunteers Alexander Blessing and Kristine Gilbertson with Otilia Eugenio

husband Fortunato Prisciliano was beaten and threatened in an attack clearly related to Inés' plans to testify in Washington. As Fortunato lay on the ground, one of the men showed him a gun he had concealed under his clothes, telling him: "If you try to do something, here is your food [sic]... what you are doing with your wife Inés against the guachos [soldiers] is a lie, we already know that you are even going to the United States, but it is not going to help at all because what you are saying is a lie..." On August 1, 2007, the attacker's uncle again threatened Fortunato, saying: "Son of a bitch, stop saying that your wife was raped by guachos, I already told you that we are going to beat you up, you already know what [my nephew] did to you."

PBI has accompanied the OPIM since February of 2005, and for their safety, PBI accompanied these women from Ayutla and then picked them up at the airport in Mexico City. The tremendous challenges faced by these women and their families are common of human rights defenders in Mexico, where the space for civil activism continues to deteriorate in the face of rapid militarization and impunity. Now more than ever, PBI needs your support.

-By Jamie Wick (US), PBI Mexico Field Volunteer

## New (and Returning) Faces at Peace Brigades International-USA!

Andrew Fandino rejoined PBI, this time as Co-Director of the USA operation with Barbara Wien in July 2007. Andrew is a PBI veteran, having served as the Colombia Project Representative in Washington, DC from 2001 to 2005. Prior to joining PBI-USA, Andrew worked as the U'wa Project Coordinator for the San Francisco-based environmental group Amazon Watch. He has also worked as the Interim Director of the US Office on Colombia and as a Graduate Research Intern on Colombia at Human Rights Watch, in addition to being a member of the Colombia Human Rights Committee and the Colombia Support Network. He has a Masters Degree in International Affairs, with a specialization in human rights in Latin America from American University; and a Bachelors in Government and Politics from the University of Maryland at College Park.

Fall 2007 brought another reoccurring face to the PBI-team. Kaitlin Reed had served as an intern in D.C. office during spring of 2007, working on several important grant proposals and editing the national newsletter. Her work was so exceptional she was hired as a Program Associate. She has a BA from American University, with a concentration on International Development and Peace and Conflict Resolution. In a strange coincidence (or is it?), all three staff members hold degrees from American University!

PBI/USA Co-Directors:  
Barbara Wien and Andrew Fandino

Newsletter Editor & Designer:  
Kaitlin Reed

National Coordinating Committee Members:  
Christopher Barkan, Kelleen Corrigan, Robin Fazio,  
Alex Hildebrand, Angie McCarthy, Matt Messier,  
Lilith Quinlan, and Sarah Simonson

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## *Orientation Sessions!*

Interested in PBI? Want to learn more about  
volunteering on a field team?

Attend one of our 2008 Orientation Sessions:

- April 12<sup>th</sup> Washington, DC
- October 25<sup>th</sup> San Francisco, CA

For information and to register, please contact  
Andrew Fandino at  
andrew@pbiousa.org.

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