

What is PBI?

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is a grassroots 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. These 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 support network helps to deter violence. We create space for local activists to work for social justice and human rights.

**Major Donor Helen Lindsay
Reflects on Her Experiences with Peace Brigades**

I have made 234 donations to Peace Brigades over the past 17 years, because, most of all, I have been impressed with the capabilities, commitment, skills and thoughtfulness of the young men and women participating on the teams. The young people who go to the field are an amazing bunch. I could never give of myself as they do. In addition, the overall program and operations of Peace Brigades are so very well planned and implemented. It is active nonviolence that has helped to keep people free to do what they need to do in areas of conflict.

I first learned about Peace Brigades through my son John and his work in Guatemala in the late 1980s. He was putting his life on the line. I



Soraya Gutierrez Arguello

needed to know why and what was happening. He was in his twenties at the time. After his return from his field service in Guatemala, he traveled to attend the Peace Brigades General Assembly in Massachusetts in 1989. I decided to go with him. At that time, there was no PBI-USA Country Group. We met to establish a Country Group. I joined the National Coordinating Committee (NCC). I have since served in various capacities on the Finance Committee and Personnel Committees. I also hosted meetings of the NCC in my home.

I never envisioned myself as a field volunteer serving on a team. I felt I could offer administrative experience at the NCC level and help backstop the country group. Although I felt I could not take the same risks or was suited to be a field volunteer, I did go on several delegations to see first-hand what was happening in Guatemala. I met with the PBI team in Guatemala and the groups they accompanied. They were remarkable visits which I shall never forget. Thank you for the experiences and for bringing my son home safely.

Women's Human Rights Defenders by *Angie McCarthy*

Peace Brigades would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the work of Women's Human Rights Defenders. Against all odds, Women HRDs from throughout the world work tirelessly for the protection and promotion of human rights. While Peace Brigades acknowledges that Women HRDs and their male colleagues are equally at risk in their positions as promoters and protectors of human rights, we recognize that women are often additionally victims of gender-specific violations and that these added risks need to be recognized and addressed.

The hostility, harassment and repression experienced by human rights defenders takes on a unique, gender-specific manner when applied to women. The particular abuses may range from verbal assaults directed exclusively at women, to sexual harassment and rape carried out by husbands/partners and male colleagues, in addition to vio-

lations perpetrated by the state. Although these abuses are also felt by male HRDs, the implications are gendered: the sexual abuse of a woman can result in pregnancy, and biology leaves women more susceptible to the contraction of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV/AIDS.

In addition to these gendered adaptations of common abuses, Women HRDs also face increased danger and exposure, as well as limited support for their work due to the challenge they pose to notions about the status of women. They take tremendous risks to confront the status quo and speak out on behalf of themselves and others on gender-specific issues such as reproductive and sexual rights. Assertion of such rights is seen by some as a threat to the traditional patriarchy and a disruption of cultural, religious and social norms, and the hostility it raises among

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Peace Brigades in the News

Adapted from *The Los Angeles Times*, September 18, 2006 Foreign Desk; Part A; Pg. 1, Chris Kraul, Times Staff Writer

Ana Hilda Vargas was living in a place called Hope when the gunmen came to her farm and gave her an ultimatum: leave your house in 48 hours or be killed.

"Everything I built in my youth and all that I had -- pigs, hens, mango and avocado trees, yucca, corn and bean fields -- I lost that day," Vargas said, recalling the terrible morning in 1997 when she was thrown off her land in the village of Esperanza by paramilitary members. It wouldn't be the last time she would hear that chilling warning.

Over the next six years, the widow, now 50, was forced from one village to another by army, right-wing paramilitary and left-wing guerrilla groups vying for control of this strategic, mineral-rich region of northwest Colombia. One of 3 million displaced Colombians, she became a statistic in one of the hemisphere's longest-running humanitarian crises.

Finally, Vargas decided she'd rather die than be rootless again. Three years ago, she joined the "peace community" of San José de Apartadó, where a group of 1,200 peasant pacifists is taking a brave stand against the country's civil conflict.

The community of three villages, which includes Arenas Altas, where Vargas lives, was formed in 1997 after a Catholic archbishop named Isaias Duarte -- who would be assassinated five years later -- encouraged the farmers to say no to war. It is one of 10 such peace communities, or "humanitarian zones," in Colombia, according to Justice and Peace, a human rights advocacy organization in Bogotá, the capital.

She and other members disavow any contact or collaboration with armed groups, and agree to work as a collective on crops, live-

stock and community projects and to share what they produce. The group is self-sufficient except for small grants from outsiders to build community projects. But the community's profession of neutrality has not shielded it from horrendous violence.

Of San José's nearly 1,400 original members, 178 have been killed since 1997 by armed groups looking to clear the zone of suspected collaborators, appropriate valuable land for themselves or claim transit routes for arms and drugs traffic in and out of nearby Pacific and Caribbean ports.

Because of the risks and hardships, there has been no inrush of new residents: since its founding, about as many members have joined as have fled.

Community leader Renato Araiza estimates that 80% of the victims have been killed by the army and rightist paramilitaries, the rest by the leftist guerrillas here in the Uraba region of Antioquia state. One day last year, his 16-year-old sister was killed by guerrillas for refusing to collaborate.

"Each side suspects us of helping the other one, and that's why they all want us to leave," said Araiza, who also has lost a cousin to the violence. "We are trying to change the logic of armed groups who think guns solve anything."

The death toll would undoubtedly be higher if it were not for the presence of volunteer "accompaniers" provided by international groups such as San Francisco-based Fellowship for Reconciliation, FOR, and Peace Brigades International, a British group. The death rate has tapered off since 2002, when FOR began placing two volunteers in the community on a full-time basis. "The hope is that by being here,

the armed groups won't commit acts that would create an international public relations problem. The political costs increase if something happens to us," said Paul Kozak, a 24-year-old Huntingdon, Pa., native and FOR volunteer here.

A deeply religious Catholic who once considered joining the priesthood, Kozak is a pacifist whose ambition is to work nonviolently to help solve conflicts. After graduating from a Jesuit college in the Midwest, he went to El Salvador to work with street gang members. Then he heard about the peace community's refusal to leave its land and volunteered as an accompanier. The accompaniers have hardly made the community bulletproof.

In February 2005, San José's leader and co-founder, Luis Eduardo Guerra, his girlfriend and his 11-year-old son were hacked to death along with five others shortly after he announced that the peace community was expanding its boundaries to include another village. His wife had been killed the year before by an army grenade.

The killings prompted outrage among international human rights groups but, as with so many other violent deaths in this region, no suspects have been jailed nor charges filed.

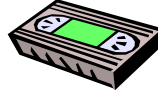
The U.S. Embassy was concerned enough about the killings of Guerra and the others to withhold human rights "certification" of Colombia for several months last year, delaying the delivery of \$35 million of the \$600 million in annual Plan Colombia aid aimed at fighting drugs and terrorism.

Appalled by the violence, the Organization of American States demanded that the Uribe government work with the peace community on

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Literature & Audio Visual Resources about the Work of Peace Brigades

DVDs & Videos:



1. "Until the Last Stone ("Hasta La Última Piedra")." About the Peace Community of San José de Apartadó. Produced by Juan José Lozano, 2006, Spanish with English subtitles.
2. "En Busca de Dignidad ("In Search of Dignity")." About the work of Peace Brigades in Guatemala. Produced by Miriam Seemann, Nina Brodowski, and Jonny Muller-Goldenstedt, 2005, Spanish with English Subtitles.
3. "In the Company of Fear." About the work of Peace Brigades in Colombia. Director, Velcrow Ripper. VHS and DVD. Reel-Myth Productions, 1999.
4. "Unarmed Commitment." A 29 minute DVD about Peace Brigades International in Guatemala by Cort Washington Productions, 1994.

Books:



1. Allenbach, M., G. Danroc, and J Stoerk, eds. *Experiences Nonviolents En Haïti*. 2001, in French only at this time.
2. Boardman, Elizabeth F. *Taking a Stand: A Guide to Peace Teams and Accompaniment Projects*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers, 2005.
3. Mahony, Liam and Luis Enrique Eguren. *Unarmed Bodyguards: International Accompaniment for the Protection of Human Rights*. West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1997.
4. Schirch, Lisa. *Civilian Peacekeeping: Reducing Violence and Making Space for Democracy*. Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 2005.

On the Web:



1. Clark, Daniel N. "Peace Brigades International: Roots and Early Years." Daniel N. Clark Homepage. 2000. Available <http://www.danielclark.zoomshare.com>
2. Van Lier, Piet. "Guatemala: A Visual Journey with Peace Brigades International." Peace Brigades International. 1995. Available at: <http://www.peacebrigades.org/guatemala/cap-piet01.html>

Dear Peace Brigades Friends,

It is with great sadness that I must announce that my time with PBI USA is drawing to a close. On May 1st I will be starting a position with Global Ministries (of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)) in Colombia, South America. Of course I am very excited about the opportunity to return to Colombia, a country so dear to my heart. In Colombia, I will be working with the "Commission for Restoration, Life and Peace" of the Colombian Council of Churches, supporting their various ministries of peace, justice and reconciliation, as well as encouraging churches in the US to take a stand for more just U.S. policies in Colombia. I have learned a great deal during my two+ years with PBI, and had a good time doing it. I have greatly appreciated your support during this time. Thanks in advance for your thoughts and prayers as I take this next step in my life journey.

Sincerely,
Michael Joseph
Co-Director PBI USA

INDONESIA PROJECT

Peace Brigades offers nonviolent protective accompaniment in Indonesia to human rights workers engaged in legal work, advocacy on behalf of victims of violence and disappearances, internally displaced persons, environmental activism, and women's movements. At the request of the local populations, Peace Brigades also offers peace education programs to Indonesians in their quest for a more peaceful, stable future, with an entire sub-team devoted solely to conducting peace education workshops. The Indonesia Project has been in operation since 1999 and the current field team is composed of 19 international volunteers from 11 different countries, including the United States. Their work takes place in three regions of Indonesia –the northern province of Aceh on the island of Sumatra, the capital city of Jakarta, and Wamena in the province of Papua. The Aceh, Wamena and Papua subteams have also recently opened multi-media resource libraries specializing in peace building and nonviolent action, and facilitated monthly discussions in the local community about empowering their traditional peace methods.



Children reading the peace education books at the PBI peace library in Wamena, Papua.

Where Does Peace B

NEPAL PROJECT



In early 2006, Peace Brigades International (PBI) launched an initiative to support peace activists and human rights defenders in Nepal in response to requests for an international peace presence by Nepali civil society members. Over the course of Nepal's ten-year insurgency, the country's "democratic middle" including nongovernmental and community-based organizations, the media, and political parties has been squeezed between an expanding Maoist insurgency and government-sponsored repression. PBI Nepal currently provides international accompaniment and protection workshops to local human rights and peace activists. Still in its beginning stages, the PBI Nepal Project has already made significant steps toward de-escalating tensions and creating space for peace activists in Nepal. Aside from providing security trainings and forging relationships with local human rights workers in Kathmandu, PBI Nepal field volunteers travel to the remote far west region of the country where the conflict has been intense. The team was successful in gaining official legal recognition to operate in Nepal. Please get in touch with our recruitment team at volunteer@pbinepal.org for more information on volunteer trainings.

GUATEMALA PROJECT

Between 2001 and 2004, over 1,900 Guatemalan women and girls have been brutally mass murdered in Guatemala. Many of them had their throats cut, or were beaten, shot or stabbed to death. Their bodies show signs of rape, torture, mutilation or dismemberment. Many victims were abducted; some were held for days before being killed. Many of the groups PBI protects in Guatemala are led by women, or are specifically devoted to women's rights. The Guatemala Project began in 1983 and, at 24 years, is PBI's longest running field presence. The nine current field team volunteers come from eight different countries and work out of their office in Guatemala City. Peace Brigades protects local Guatemalan individuals and organizations who work on some of the following pressing issues: globalization; environmental protection – particularly the effects of large mining corporations and illegal logging; labor rights, campesino land rights; access to housing and services; disappearances and other atrocities perpetrated during the war; empowerment of indigenous people; peasant worker rights; prevention and education of HIV/AIDS; and protection of homosexuals, lesbians, bisexuals, and transgender individuals.



PBI volunteer Csilla Horvath accompanies Mayan women to exhume the graves of their loved ones killed by the Guatemalan death squads.

MEXICO PROJECT

In Mexico, the criminal justice system is gravely flawed. The country's law and enforcement agencies and judicial system do not effectively protect people from human rights abuses, and perpetrators are rarely brought to justice. Since 1999 PBI Mexico has been the sole organization protecting human rights workers in the state of Guerrero, which has the world's 4th highest torture rate. The team, consisting of seven international volunteers from six different countries, is strongly committed to the protection of indigenous peoples, environmental activism, and advocacy for land rights, political freedom, women's rights, and victims of disappearances. In late 2006 the Mexico Project implemented an innovative new protection tool – "Short-term Accompaniment" - to respond to an increasing number of emergency requests coming from isolated communities in rural states. PBI-Mexico has also expanded its presence in extremely vulnerable indigenous communities by accompanying the Organization of the Indigenous People Me'Phaa (OPIM) and the "Tlachinollan" Human Rights Center of the Montaña.



The Organization of Women Ecologists in the Sierra de Petatlan (OMESP), which organizes women in rural communities to promote human rights, environmental protection, and land rights, celebrates their anniversary in El Zapotillal, Guerrero, Mexico.

Brigades International Work

COLOMBIA PROJECT

The conflict in Colombia, South America, is increasingly militarized and human rights defenders are highly vulnerable. PBI maintains our largest presence in a country facing urgent problems, such as demobilizing 30,000 paramilitaries and other illegal armed actors, the drug trade, the poisoning of water and soil from aerial fumigation of coca crops (with legitimate crops sprayed as well), environmental destruction from logging, and threats to and displacements of Afro-Colombian populations. The PBI Colombia Project has been protecting human rights workers since 1994, and currently includes 32 volunteers from 14 different countries, including four USA volunteers. Four sub-teams operate in Urabá, Magdalena Medio, Medellín, and Bogotá. Our partner organizations engage in legal advocacy and human rights promotion, and protection, education, training and monitoring on behalf of political prisoners, women and youth, NGOs, families of the disappeared and murdered, and displaced persons. PBI-USA participated in a rally in Washington DC on February 21, 2007 to commemorate the two year anniversary of the massacre of seven members of the peace community in San José de Apartadó, Colombia. The rally urged Congress to change US policy towards Colombia and cut funding for the ongoing war, as Colombia is the third highest recipient of U.S. military aid in the world.



A coalition of human rights groups, including PBI-USA, Amnesty International, the Washington Office on Latin America, Witness for Peace, and the U.S. Office on Colombia, rallies at the U.S. Congress to call for a "New U.S. Policy Toward Colombia."

25 Ways to Help Peace Brigades

- #1.** Invite a Peace Brigades speaker to your community, campus or place of worship. Even further, help us organize a statewide speaking tour for a returning volunteer fresh from the field. This generates income, new volunteers and publicity for PBI.
- #2.** Join our grassroots Emergency Response Network (ERN). This means we would send you an alert and you would then ask your friends, neighbors and elected officials to put pressure on human rights abusers if our teams or the civil society groups we accompany are threatened. In 2004 the ERN proved very effective in responding to Colombian President Alvaro Uribe's threat to deport PBI volunteers, and in 2005 in holding-up military assistance to Colombia.
- #3.** Spread the word about Peace Brigades to everyone you know. Urge them to send us a donation. Sprinkle our newsletter or brochures around public places (dentist offices, bus stations, coffee shops, community bulletin boards, etc.). Advertise our website to everyone in your email address book. Send messages to all your friends telling them about the Orientation Weekend you just attended. Talk to any journalists you know about contacting us to do a story on PBI. Think back about how you first learned of PBI, and duplicate that with others.
- #4.** Help us host an Orientation Weekend in your hometown. This would involve finding a free or inexpensive facility (a college classroom or church facility), working with us to recruit serious participants, finding food donations from area restaurants, and much more!
- #5.** Intern at our office for at least 3 months. You'll gain lots of skills and have fun. If you can't do it, tell your friends to apply to intern with PBI/USA.
- #6.** Translate PBI materials from Spanish into English when we need extra help.
- #7.** Join our National Coordinating Committee (board). You'll be given more projects and tasks than you ever dreamed possible!
- #8.** Join one of our Committees. While chaired by members of our NCC (board) committees are open to non-board members. Current committees include: Development, Finance, Communications, Alumni Network, Strategic Planning and Volunteer Support.
- #9.** Ask your local TV station to air the PBI documentary "In the Company of Fear" about our protection work in Colombia, or our new DVD about our teams in Guatemala. If they won't, host a screening yourself. Better yet, help us find ways to produce a new movie about PBI.
- #10.** Ask radio stations to interview a PBI speaker on the air.
- #11.** Help us get PBI public service announcements (PSAs) on the radio & TV stations in your area. This will help us recruit volunteers and donors (our PSAs are currently being written).
- #12.** Identify pro bono communications specialists and marketing professionals who would help test various PBI messages, themes & images with focus groups to find out how we can appeal to a much broader audience, and become a household name in the U.S. (like Amnesty or Greenpeace).
- #13.** Locate (or donate) new computer equipment & professional services. We could use a pro bono professional accountant to handle our bookkeeping, finances, tax filings and more.
- #14.** Put us in touch with mental health professionals you know and trust, who would counsel our volunteers on stress and trauma coping skills before they travel, while they are in the field and after they return home. This is a new important area of work called our Volunteer Support Network.
- #15.** Get matching funds or corporate donations from ethical, socially responsible companies that might have an interest in the work of PBI.
- #16.** Ask your local public/university library to purchase and stock PBI publications (books) and the "In the Company of Fear" documentary.
- #17.** Volunteer as a "guest editor" for our tri-annual newsletter.
- #18.** Ask your local grocery stores to stock (and then buy) Peace Cereal brand's "Organic Mango Passion" and "Raspberry Ginger Crisp" cereal. PBI is featured on the back of the box!
- #19.** Write birthday cards to our volunteers in the field.
- #20.** Become a PBI/USA Monthly Sustainer. By pledging a monthly amount to be donated to PBI (charged to your credit card), you help us ensure a stable flow of funds for our operations.
- #21.** Speak in area high schools and colleges about PBI.
- #22.** "Table" for PBI at local peace events and/or career fairs (we'd be glad to supply materials)!
- #23.** Host a PBI House Party. These are lots of fun and great fundraisers too! We'd be glad to send materials, and ensure participation of national staff (and potentially international volunteers) in person or via speakerphone.
- #24.** Help PBI design an award-winning poster (from time to time we are invited to join contests that would judge graphic design work done for PBI).
- #25.** Include PBI in your will!

Women's Human Rights Defenders *Continued from page 1*

conservative and traditional populations is all the more exaggerated when women are the organizers, given that they are considered markers of culture and religion. As a result, they often face alienation from their communities, eliminating a primary support system and making them even more vulnerable to abuse.

Women often face the additional burden of poverty. Changing dynamics in the international arena, globalization in particular, have had the most devastating economic

effects on women. As a result, they are compelled to seek forms of employment which are often exploitative, making them vulnerable to violence in the workplace, such as sexual harassment, abuse, and in some instances sterilization practices. Women organizing for their rights as workers face the armed might of the state, transnational corporations, and diverse militant groups.

Peace Brigades currently protects the representatives of over 14 women's human rights associations

in Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, Indonesia, and Nepal, and conducts security trainings for women's rights NGOs in the Congo, Burundi and Rwanda. In recent years we have increased and enhanced our gender-sensitivity and gender equality trainings for PBI's field teams before they deploy and during their service.

For more information go to the International Women Human Rights Defenders Campaign at: www.defendingwomendefendingrights.org

PBI in the News *Continued from page 2*

protective measures. But two months after the killings of Guerra and the others, Uribe unilaterally established a national police base in the middle of San José de Apartadó.

The community objected, saying any such base should have been located far outside town. Most of the residents fled and no longer consider the town of San José part of the neutral zone.

"No one has forgotten what happened in Bojaya," said Araiza, the community leader, referring to a town in neighboring Choco state where guerrillas in 2002 killed 119 peasants in a mortar attack after the paramilitary units army briefly occupied the village.

Three more members have been killed since the February 2005 slayings.

Colombia's paramilitaries are in the process of disarming, but

Uribe's growing army is filling the vacuum.

In a community where everyone seems to have lost a loved one to the arbitrary power of the gun, Vargas is no exception: her husband and two brothers were killed in the conflict. She doesn't like talking about how they died.

In March, a gun battle between guerrillas and the army broke out; as the two sides fired at each other from opposite ridges, bullets whizzed over the town in the small valley below, leaving one soldier dead.

Vargas believes the presence of Kozak and fellow FOR volunteer Gilberto Villasenor saved villagers from another forced evacuation order, or worse.

"If they weren't here, we would have been crushed," she said. Just before the battle erupted, Varg-

as and the two volunteers approached troops who had gathered in the soccer field below the town. She knew guerrillas were in the area, and asked the soldiers to release a father and son they had detained and leave to avoid bloodshed.

Kozak, who described the half-hour shootout as "terrifying and deafening," spoke admiringly of Vargas' courage, saying that she put herself in harm's way to spare the village from violence, that her stubborn insistence on speaking up and staying put had furthered the cause of peace.

Vargas, who still hopes the war will end and she will one day return to her farm in Esperanza, said she had little left to lose. "Living in the country," she said, "is the only way I know to exist."

Volunteer Corner

Debra Stanislawski is an American PBI volunteer writing from Nepal

I am glad to feel the fresh breath of 2007 on my shoulders and hope you are also as privileged as I am. New Year's was very pleasant. The year here in Nepal is 2063, so Nepalis won't celebrate until April! The new year promises to bring me some very badly needed yoga classes to help with the stress of serving on the PBI team, in a place where yoga is so popular that children practice it at school for their gym classes!

Work is mostly good, the only negative part being the insane number of hours we work, as there are only five of us in the office at the moment. Working for human rights is not always the easiest endeavor. Another teammate and I recently spent the day in a small village, looking at the simplicity of Nepal, just a fifteen minute ride from Kathmandu. The countryside is beautiful! If you can make it to Nepal, I assure you it will be well worth the trip!



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ANNOUNCEMENTS!



Host a returning field volunteer in your community for speaking engagements Fall 2007.



Serve on the PBI-USA Finance Committee. The organization is currently looking for people to give of their time and effort as committee members.

for More Information
Contact Barbara Wien
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