



Dear Friend of Peace,

Since April 15 is US Tax Day, I'd like to urge you to [Pay the Peace Tax - pledge to donate your tax refund to Peace with Justice and the work of PBI, to balance those taxes used for War.](#) With your support, Peace Brigades International continues our work for peace with justice, in solidarity with human rights defenders around the world!

Read on and get an update on the just-completed [high level advocacy tour focused on Mexican human rights and human rights defenders accompanied by PBI-Mexico's project, as well as women human rights defenders and efforts of the WHRD International Coalition.](#) Michael Tamblyn, In-Country Coordinator based in Mexico City, and I teamed up for this tour which included meetings in Washington, DC and New York City at the State Department, US Congress, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, UN Human Rights Committee and Commission on the Status of Women's annual UN conference. We also represented as members of the WHRD IC taskforce. [The taskforce is working on a Global Report on the Situation of Women Human Rights Defenders, which will be a resource for an official report by Margaret Sekkagya, the UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, at UN meetings in March 2011.](#)

Additionally, [PBI-USA is hosting a Guatemala Advocacy Tour featuring returning US volunteer Jessica Fujan and German volunteer Sylvia Weber in June 2010.](#) The tour will include workshop presentations at the US Social Forum in Detroit, Michigan, June 22-26, and political and strategic meetings in Washington, DC, New York City, and Boston. The Speaking Tour will highlight the current situation of indigenous people in Guatemala, who are struggling to hold onto their land, culture, and rights in the face of violence caused by globalization, multi-national corporations and governmental actors.

A few other exciting updates include [PBI's planned launch of the National Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights, NLCHR, an advisory committee to PBI, during the fall of 2010.](#) An impressive group of international and human rights lawyers across the United States will be founding members of this committee aimed at mobilizing the legal field to support and provide technical advice and pro-bono work to human rights defenders (many of them lawyers themselves) that PBI accompanies. A PBI-USA task force including NCC member Sarah Simonson and intern Kristin Donovan are leading the implementation process.

Additionally, PBI-USA's new Advisory Board is coming together with key members committed to serve, including Liam Mahony, best known for his co-authorship of *Unarmed Bodyguards*, the premier book on protective accompaniment and PBI's work. [PBI-USA is also taking the lead on organizing a national network advocating for human rights in Nepal.](#)

Finally, we are sad to be losing our hard working Program Assistant, Carly Skidmore, but wish her the best in her new career move.

Keep up the hope, but most of all, keep up the work!

Peace,

Katherine

Katherine Hughes-Fraitekh

Executive Director

info@pbiousa.org

Quote of the Month



"Over the years, we have faced moments of great danger and difficulty in our work. Our latest victory - the Inter-American Court of Human Rights decision in the case of my father, Rosendo Radilla, a disappeared community leader - will have a major impact on improving human rights across Mexico and would not have been possible without our long-term partnership with PBI and their commitment to providing us with protection and international support".

Tita Radilla

-In This Issue-

[Guatemala Advocacy Tour](#)

[PBI-USA Joining Women's Human Rights Defenders International Coalition](#)

[Days of Prayer & Action in Colombia](#)

[Leave a Legacy for Peace! Planned Giving Opportunities](#)

[Volunteer Spotlight: Jessica Fujan, Guatemala](#)

[US Social Forum](#)

Focus on Mexico: Highlights of the Successful PBI Mexico Advocacy Tour in the United States



Michael Tamblin, PBI-Mexico's In-Country Coordinator, journeyed to the US to partner with PBI-USA's Director to advocate for improved human rights in Mexico. The volatile situation in Mexico, especially on the border, is of great concern to many Americans so this was an opportune time to raise the issue of human rights in Mexico. One of Mike's goals was to seek support of public officials in the US for Mexican compliance with a recent decision by the Inter-American Court on Human Rights on behalf of Rosendo Radilla, forcibly disappeared in Mexico's "Dirty War" in the 1970s. Tita Radilla is Rosendo's daughter and Vice President of the Association against Forced Disappearances and Detentions in Mexico (AFADEM), an organization representing the families of 600 similarly disappeared persons in Guerrero State. Ms. Radilla has been accompanied by PBI over the last decade due to violent threats against her and her work seeking truth, justice and reparation for the victims and she was hosted by PBI-USA during a Speaking Tour last March.

The decision of the IACHR establishes the responsibility of the Mexican State for the violation of Mr Radilla's rights to life, liberty and personal integrity, as well as the failure to recognize Mr. Radilla's legal rights. In a definitive and irreversible sentence, the IACHR orders the Mexican government to efficiently carry out an investigation into the case; continue to search for and locate Mr. Radilla or his remains; determine the corresponding legal responsibilities; and compensate Mr. Radilla's family. In addition, the IACHR found that Mexico must adopt, within a reasonable time frame, the necessary legislative reforms that would align Article 57 of the Military Justice Code with recognized international standards on the matter, leading to major reforms in the Mexican military justice system. Many human rights organizations have argued that the military justice system should not be considered the appropriate authority in cases of human rights violations committed by soldiers against civilians, as that system does not guarantee independence and impartiality.

Pay the Peace Tax!



April 15th is US Tax Day - why not pledge to donate your tax refund to Peace & Justice and the work of PBI to balance those taxes used for War? [_ Donate your refund today!](#)

Guatemala Advocacy Tour June 2010

After involvement at the US Social Forum in Detroit, the PBI-Guatemala team, accompanied by PBI-USA, will embark on the rest of their advocacy tour. Meetings are scheduled with: the US State Department and Congress, as well as groups working on Indigenous Rights, Guatemalan human rights and globalization in Washington, DC; Center for Women's Global Leadership and the Women's Human Rights Defenders International Coalition Director at Rutgers State University in New Jersey; UN Mission and Commission on the Status of Women members in New York City; and community members and leaders and academia in Boston. The focus of the tour will be on human rights issues in Guatemala, specifically related to indigenous rights, land exploitation, multinational corporations, and feminist organizations, and the concern that a record number of human rights defenders were killed in 2009, with early figures showing that 2010 will be worse.

Jessica and Silvia will also share personal insights and advice about their experiences as PBI field volunteers and also give first-hand accounts of the courageous work of HRDs in Guatemala, struggling to achieve peace with justice after a long and painful internal conflict.

For more information or to help organize a meeting or event in your

During meetings at the US State Department, US Congress, and Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in Washington, DC, officials pledged to the PBI team to make vocal their call for Mexico's compliance with the Court's decision. They also agreed to monitor the upcoming IACHR hearings in April regarding the case of PBI accompaneros - Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú- two members of the indigenous organization OPIM who were raped by members of the Mexican military due to their social justice work. Additionally, based on PBI's non-violent principles, the PBI team asked for further information from US government officials regarding the possibility that, in the future, US aid to Mexico, mandated in the Merida Initiative, may go toward institution building, training of police forces, and development of communities, rather than aid to build up the Mexican military. They were also able to meet with Mexican policy specialists at the Woodrow Wilson International Center's Mexico Institute, Washington Office on Latin America, Latin America Working Group, Freedom House and the Open Society Institute. While in NYC, PBI's advocacy team participated in the United Nations Human Rights Committee hearings on Mexico. The Human Rights Committee is the body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights by its State parties. Our team was able to share information and communicate their concerns to the members of the Committee on relevant issues, acting as part of the formal NGO advisory process. They were delighted to hear the delegation of high level Mexican government officials voicing their strong commitment to implementation of the Rosendo Radilla decision during the hearing, including major reforms in the military justice system.

Additionally, PBI's staff attended meetings of the Commission on the Status of Women annual conference at the UN, including a full day program sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership, based at Rutgers State University, assessing the future of the global women's rights movement and related challenges of WHRDs. They also participated in the Women's Human Rights Defender's International Coalition taskforce developing a Global Report on WHRDs, to be utilized by UN Special Rapporteur Margaret Sekkagya in development of her official UN report.

Volunteer Spotlight: Jessica Fujan, Guatemala

PBI-USA is proud to welcome home **Jessica Fujan**, who recently returned from the **PBI Guatemala Project**. Jessica Fujan returns to Minnesota where she is currently speaking to high school students and Kiwanis Clubs statewide about her experience as a PBI volunteer and the challenges that human rights defenders in Guatemala face. People see her experience as



PBI-USA Joining Women's Human Rights Defenders International Coalition

PBI is in the process of formally joining the Women's Human Rights Defenders International Coalition and has been assisting them in a number of their initiatives, including work on a requested proposal to be submitted to UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders, Margaret Sekkagya, related to special protections and challenges faced by women's human rights defenders. The WHRD IC is a resource and advocacy network for the protection and support of WHRDs worldwide. An international initiative created out of the international campaign on WHRDs launched in 2005, the Coalition calls attention to the recognition of women human rights defenders. It asserts that those advocating for women's human rights - no matter what gender or sexual orientation they claim - are in fact WHRDs. Their gender or the nature of their work has made them the subject of attacks, requiring gender-sensitive mechanisms for their protection and support. The Coalition includes women activists, as well as men who defend women's rights and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) defenders and groups committed to the advancement of women's human rights and sexual rights. The Coalition is currently composed of 21 members, including Amnesty International, Asia Forum, Front Line, Human Rights First, MADRE and World Organization Against Torture.



"Volunteering with PBI has been an exceptional opportunity to work alongside local organizations in a capacity and with an intimacy that seems impossible in any other context."

President of Guatemala, President Alfonso Portillo, in 2000, admitted to government responsibility acknowledging the deaths of 226 victims, including women and children.

Jessica especially enjoyed accompanying Lorena Cabnal Hernandez, a leader of the AMISMAXAJ women's coalition, a new partner of PBI, composed of indigenous Xinka women fighting against global economic interests. AMISMAXAJ was founded in February 2004 and is made up of 75 women leaders representing 15 Xinka communities from the Santa María Xalapán Mountain (Jalapa). The association works actively in the region of Jalapa, promoting women's rights, the revitalization of their Xinka ethnicity and the defense of land and territory.

very exotic and are interested to hear about it, while at the same time, Jessica is excited by the parallels between the struggles for sustainability of rural communities and farms in Minnesota and those in Guatemala.

Jessica will be the featured speaker, along with Sylvia Weber, a German volunteer in Guatemala, during a June Speaking Tour to the US, which will include attendance at the US Social Forum. Jessica helped with PBI-USA's effort to nominate Mr. Edgar Fernando Pérez Archila, lawyer and human rights defender, for the Human Rights First Roger N. Baldwin Medal of Liberty Award. PBI accompanies Mr. Perez, a high profile lawyer and pioneer against impunity in Guatemala involved in such emblematic cases as the Dos Erres Massacre, for which the

PBI-USA to Participate in US Social Forum

PBI-USA is excited to participate in the upcoming US Social Forum scheduled for June 22-26, 2010 in Detroit, Michigan. 20,000 activists from around the country are expected to attend this gathering and we hope to meet up with a number of our supporters and past volunteers while there. This important gathering is being touted as: "more than an event, more than a networking bonanza, more than a reaction to war and repression. The USSF will provide space to build relationships, learn from each other's experiences, share our analysis of the problems our communities face, and bring renewed insight and inspiration. It will help develop leadership and consciousness, vision, and strategy needed to realize another world." It features a number of workshop and organizing tracks related to the environment, social justice, peace and non-violent

Upcoming Events

Apr. 13 -15: Days of Prayer & Action for Colombia

Apr. 19-25: PBI's National Speaking Tour on Guatemalan Human Rights to feature Jessica Fujan, a volunteer returning from Guatemala.

Upcoming Project Application Deadlines

Colombia: May 6

Nepal: Sept. 1

Guatemala: TBA

Indonesia: TBA

Mexico: TBA

Click on any of the country links above to visit the project's Volunteer Info page & download an application today!



With nearly five million Colombians forcibly displaced from their homes by a debilitating war, Colombia is now the second worst internal displacement crisis in the world. The U.S. has for too long been part of Colombia's problem, not the solution. This March and April, tens of thousands across the U.S. and Colombia will participate in this year's Days of Prayer and Action for Colombia to call for a much-needed shift in U.S. policies toward the war-torn country. PBI-Colombia is PBI's largest project with 36 + volunteers and 4 teams throughout the country. Emily Nelson, Communications & Outreach Officer PBI, is a lead organizer and can be contacted for further information or questions at

resistance, and human rights.

Peace Brigades International will be involved in leading two workshops: ***Leveraging Power: Building Solidarity through International Accompaniment*** and ***Indigenous People Face New Challenges in Defense of Resources and Territory***. The first workshop will explore the successes and challenges of protective accompaniment, a nonviolent strategy that groups utilize to protect threatened individuals and communities in countries in conflict like Colombia, Mexico, Guatemala, Nepal, Indonesia, Palestine/Israel and Iraq. This workshop is co-sponsored by Fellowship of Reconciliation, International Solidarity Movement and Christian Peacemaker Teams. Gretchen Begley, newly returning PBI-USA volunteer from Colombia will be included on the panel.

The second workshop will be included in the *Climate Justice: sustainability, resources, and land and Indigenous Sovereignty* tracks. This workshop will focus on the challenges currently faced by indigenous peoples around the world struggling to hold onto their land, culture, and rights in the face of globalization, multinational corporations and governmental actors. Overviews of relevant international law, including UN resolutions on indigenous rights will be included as well as updates on the **First Peoples' World Conference on Climate Change and Mother Earth's Rights** to be held in the Bolivian city of Cochabamba in April. Struggles of environmentalists, feminists and indigenous activists in Papua, Indonesia, Guerrero and Oaxaca, Mexico, Colombia, and Guatemala will be highlighted. Jessica Fujan, recently returned PBI-USA volunteer from Guatemala and Silvia Weber, PBI Guatemala staff, will be featured.

Summer Volunteer

Orientation Weekend



PBI-USA's Spring Volunteer Orientation Weekend has been rescheduled to Summer 2010.

If you are interested in becoming a field volunteer in a PBI Project or if you have already applied, it is strongly encouraged that you attend this event. Learn more about PBI's mission, vision, non-violent strategies and protective accompaniment model, including our international diplomacy and advocacy initiatives. Former volunteers will share firsthand accounts of the volunteer process and experience. You'll participate in many role playing activities, hear from international specialists from partner organizations about human rights work and political analysis of the Project Countries, as well as enjoy social networking opportunities. Registration forms can be [downloaded here](#).

repusa2@pbicolombia.net.

Witness for Peace, School of Americas Watch, the Colombia Steering Committee, Fellowship of Reconciliation and Peace Brigades International are partners in this initiative.

[Click here for more information on how you can help.](#)

Planned Giving Opportunities: Leave a Legacy for Peace!

Leave a permanent legacy supporting your commitment to social change and peace with justice. Planned Giving with PBI is a way to continue your philanthropic vision that is aligned with your principles and priorities. **You can continue to support the issues that you feel passionately about while ensuring that your charitable intent is honored far into the future.**

Donating to the work of PBI through a bequest in your will ensures that the work protecting human rights defenders will continue in the future.

Contact katherine@pbiusa.org

if you're interested in more details about supporting human rights as part of your legacy.