

Peace Brigades International-USA

Newsletter

AUGUST 2010

Dear Friend of Peace,

With your support, Peace Brigades International continues our work for peace with justice, in solidarity with human rights defenders around the world. Here's an update on PBI activities in the US.

We're currently preparing for our national board meeting in San Francisco, September 11th and 12th, including a national gathering and Reception for Peace the evening of September 11, with keynote speaker Michael Nagler, one of the world's most widely respected peace scholars and activists. The evening will also include an update on PBI's work internationally, slideshow by Dana Brown, a returning PBI volunteer from Colombia, donor appreciation and time for informal networking.

If you live in the Bay Area, please contact us for more information-we'd love to see you there.

We've had quite a busy summer working on advocacy and education initiatives, including PBI-sponsored workshops at the US Social Forum in Detroit on protective accompaniment with our allies FOR, CPT and ISM; indigenous rights under attack in collaboration with the Guatemala Human Rights Commission-USA; and a workshop on impunity in Latin America. Representing PBI were Gretchen Begley and Jessica Fujan, recently returned PBI-USA volunteers from Colombia and Guatemala, Silvia Weber, PBI-Guatemala In-Country Coordinator and myself.

We enjoyed meeting, recruiting and networking with as many of the 20,000+ attendees as possible during the week-long forum where issues critical to human rights, civil resistance and non-violent struggle were tackled.

From the USSF, the Guatemala delegation continued on to Washington, DC, and New York City for a Guatemalan Human Rights advocacy tour. We raised issues critical to the human rights activists we accompany related to indigenous land and cultural rights, women's rights (especially in the mountainous Xinca community) and impunity, with representatives from the US Department of State and Congress, NGO allies, Guatemalan Embassy, PBI's National Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

We voiced the Defenders support for passage in the US of the UN Declaration of the Rights on Indigenous People and documented the

increasingly detrimental role that multi-national corporations and megaprojects are playing in human rights abuses in Guatemala. We were able to raise the profile and importance of these issues at a time when they are no longer in the forefront of US consciousness.

Meanwhile, the first official meeting of the National Lawyer's Committee on Human Rights, NLCHR, an advisory committee to PBI-USA, was held in June. Its members include 16 high profile international human rights lawyers and professors from across the country ready to support human rights defenders and lawyers that PBI accompanies. **An official launch is planned for October 29-30, 2010 in Washington, DC**, to coincide with the American Bar Association's Center for Human Rights meeting and the Inter-American Commission hearings. Members will present workshops, meet with IACHR commissioners and PBI-partner HRDs from Colombia and Mexico, and hold a gala dinner.

Additionally, the NLCHR Chair, Kay Bridger-Riley, hosted PBI at the annual ABA conference in San Francisco in July and we discussed a number of collaborative initiatives between PBI and ABA international committees and leaders and presented at the Center for Human Rights forum. **The legal community in the US is a critical and underutilized resource to promote and protect international human rights that PBI plans to increase its collaboration with.**

Finally, if you've always struggled-as we do-to have the complex vision, mission and non-violent strategies and tactics of PBI's methods to protect human rights activists, termed *protective accompaniment*, summed up in 1 hour or less, you're in luck!

The nationally syndicated radio show, Peace Talks Radio, featured our work in their June program: **Peaceful Strategies for Protecting Human Rights Defenders**, weaving together PBI's history, rationale, strategies and examples in an engaging and descriptive one hour show. It features Liam Mahony, author of Unarmed Bodyguards and long-term PBI leader, Dana Brown, returning volunteer from Colombia, Mel Duncan, founder of partner NVP and myself. Check it out [online](#).

Upcoming fall activities include sponsoring an advocacy tour featuring the San Jose de Apartado Peace community from Colombia in the beginning of October, an advocacy tour featuring Human Rights Defenders from Guerrero and Oaxaca in late October and the International Advocacy meeting and EU Parliament lobbying activities in November.

We greatly appreciate your financial donations which are critical to our ongoing work. [Click Here](#) to make a tax deductible online donation.

In this time of challenge for peace, at home and abroad, I'll leave you with a thought from one of my favorite progressive voices, British Pakistani Tariq Ali. He argues that the greatest value of our work for peace with justice cannot be measured by our short-term outcomes, but by the very act of our struggle in solidarity with those that are oppressed.

Peace,

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