



Peace Brigades International *Brigadas Internacionales de Paz*

Proyecto Guatemala/ Guatemala Project

Project Coordination Office:
Plaza Manuel Granero, 9, 18
46006 Valencia. Spain
Tel.: (+34) 963 816 835
coordinacion@pbi-guatemala.org

Team Office in Guatemala:
3ª Avenida 'A' 3-51, Zona 1
Guatemala City. Guatemala
Tel/fax: (+502) 2220 1032
equipo@pbi-guatemala.org

PBI web: www.peacebrigades.org
PBI Guatemala Project web: <http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/>

PBI GUATEMALA PROJECT SUPPORT NETWORK ACTIVATION INFORMATIVE LETTER

This is an informative letter from the Guatemala Project of Peace Brigades International (PBI), the international non-governmental organisation working to promote peace, non-violence and human rights through international observation and accompaniment. The aim of this letter is to give information about the activation of the project's Support Network (SN), which we have carried out due to grave threats against several human rights defenders accompanied by PBI in Guatemala.

PBI works to protect the political space in which threatened human rights defenders can continue their non-violent human rights work. To achieve this, the PBI team on the ground in Guatemala accompanies these threatened individuals and organisations, visits the interior of the country, disseminates information about the situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala, and meets with authorities, public security forces and other state institutions, non-governmental organisations, churches, the diplomatic corps and international organisations.

On this occasion, we are writing to selected contacts of PBI Guatemala Project Support Network to express our **concern about a dramatic increase in SERIOUS THREATS against Guatemalan human rights defenders that we accompany. The threats are happening in the context of their work promoting economic, social, cultural and environmental rights, and the right of indigenous peoples to be informed and consulted before approval is given to large-scale development projects that affect them and their lands.**

Although with different details, the threats we describe in the attached documents all relate to conflict between rural communities and state and non-state actors,¹ over natural resources and land in ancestral community territories. In all the cases, economic interests are a factor on one side, and on the other side the communities' fears for their bases of survival, and their demand that their right to prior information and consultation be respected. The context is characterised by violence and shrinking social and political spaces in which human rights defenders can carry out their work. According to the rural communities and organisation PBI accompanies, the violence they are facing now evokes the times of armed internal conflict in Guatemala.

WE URGENTLY REQUEST the attention of the international community on the security and integrity of the members of the National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA), the 'New Day' Chortí Central Campesino Coordinator, the Comoteca Campesino Association (ACC), the Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María

¹ We follow the concept of non-state actors used by the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs), Mrs Margaret Sekaggya, in her report of 4 August 2010, on the responsibility of non-state agents for violations of the human rights of HRDs. The Special Rapporteur focusses on the role of armed groups, private companies, individuals and the media. United Nations General Assembly, 65th Session, "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders", 4 August 2010.

Xalapán (AMISMAXAJ), and the Association for the Protection of Las Granadillas Mountain (APMG). The threats against their leaders and members – which in almost all cases have included death threats – do not only constitute very grave risks to their security, their lives and their integrity, but also seriously affect their human rights work.

We also wish to alert the international community to acts of intimidation against members of the PBI Guatemala team, which took place while they carried out work of international observation during the commemoration of indigenous resistance on 12 October in Jalapa.

We encourage the international community to monitor the situation of the social organisations mentioned above, their members and the social movements they promote or in which they participate.

We have asked our Support Network contacts to take action to:

- Put into place the **protection mechanisms described in the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders,**
- **Express to the Guatemalan authorities your concern:**
 - about the threats described in the attached documents, and for the security and integrity of the organisations' members
 - about the acts of intimidation against two members of PBI's team (a Dutch volunteer and an Argentinian volunteer), as they carried out work of international observation and accompaniment in Jalapa;
- **Ask the appropriate Guatemalan authorities:**
 - to guarantee compliance with current legislation and with international human rights law in their actions relating to the conflicts described, particularly respecting the rights to information, consultation, and free prior and informed consent of indigenous communities relating to plans or projects that affect the land and natural resources of the areas they inhabit;
 - to adopt necessary measures to guarantee the security, life and integrity of the organisations' members, and to protect their work and that of the communities they support so that they can act in spaces that are free of violence;
 - To carry out appropriate investigations to clarify these threats.
- **Monitor the investigations and any legal processes** relating to the threats and intimidations described.

We attach detailed information about the situation described. We thank our Support Network contacts for their interest and collaboration with the work of PBI, and thank you in advance for your support in these cases.

Yours sincerely

BRIGADAS INTERNACIONALES DE PAZ