



Monthly Information Package from Guatemala

Number 125 – February 2014

1. CURRENT SITUATION

Monthly selection of news on the situation in Guatemala as highlighted by the press, related to the main thematic areas of PBI Guatemala's work: the fight against impunity, land issues and the negative effects of globalisation on human rights.

Claudia Paz y Paz's term as Attorney General

This month's news was dominated by debate over the term to be served by Claudia Paz y Paz who originally was named Attorney General of Guatemala on the 9th of December 2010 by then president Álvaro Colom. In June of that year, previous to this decision, the Constitutional Court annulled the appointment of Conrado Reyes who served as Attorney General since May 2010. The court ordered that the process of selection be repeated from the moment that the Congress ordered that an Appointments Committee be established¹.

As Attorney General of Guatemala, the work of Claudia Paz y Paz in the protection of human rights and in the fight against impunity has been recognized in both Guatemala and at an international level by a variety of actors. Because of her and commitment, last year she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize. Forbes magazine publicly recognized her work in 2012, stating that since assuming the role "she has worked to bring about justice against organized crime, human rights violations, and those responsible for gender based violence."² Between 2011 and 2013, together with other members of the justice system, the Department of Public Prosecutions (MP) played a crucial role in the legal prosecution and formal accusation of members of the National Army, including former heads of State, who have been brought before the justice system accused of gross violations of human rights during the country's internal armed conflict. In 2013, the Public Prosecutor's Office was a plaintiff in the trial for genocide committed against the Ixil population. It publicly denounced irregularities and illegal actions that took place throughout the judicial process³.

In 2014, Claudia Paz y Paz will conclude her official mandate as Attorney General. It is to be disputed this month at the Constitutional Court if she is to remain in the post until December, the date that marks four years in office since she was named, or whether she should leave in May, on the date that marks four years since the naming of Attorney General as stipulated by the Appointments Committee originally established by Congress (Accord 2 - 2010 Congress). The press highlights the following aspects of the debate:

- In January, lawyer Ricardo Sagastume Morales, lodged two appeals for the legal protection of Constitutional Rights at the Constitutional Court (CC); he argues that the Public Prosecutor should be relieved of her duties on the 17th of May and calls for the installation of a new Appointments Committee.
- On the 6th of February the CC grants a Provisional Protection Order and ordered that Congress begin the call for an Appointments Committee to decide who will be Public Prosecutor for the period of 2014 -2018.
- A few days later, international media revealed that two technical offices of the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) had

¹ Prensa Libre, "La CC anula elección del fiscal Conrado Reyes", Guatemala, 11.06.2010.

http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/CC-eleccion-fiscal-Conrado-Reyes_0_278372195.html

² Forbes, "The 5 Most Powerful Women Changing The World In Politics And Public Policy", 22.08.2012

<http://www.forbes.com/sites/susanmcperson/2012/08/22/melanne-verveer-the-5-most-powerful-women-changing-the-world-in-politics-and-public-policy/>

³ MP, "El día de hoy la jueza Carol Patricia Flores dictó una resolución ilegal", Guatemala, 18.04.2013

<http://www.mp.gob.gt/2013/04/el-dia-de-hoy-la-jueza-carol-patricia-flores-dicto-una-resolucion-ilegal/>

Prensa Libre, "Ministerio Público rechaza amnistía para Ríos Montt", Guatemala, 25.10.2013

http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/justicia/MP-rechaza-amnistia_0_1017498269.html

- previously ruled (in 2013) that the Public Prosecutors term should end in December 2014⁴.
- On the 14th of February, Claudia Paz y Paz lodged an Appeal for the legal protection of Constitutional Rights but it was refused according to her argument, the term for which she was named should come to an end in December.
 - The Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH), the Guatemalan Human Rights Convergence and the organizations Women Transforming the World (MTM) also presented two legal actions aimed at reversing the decision of the CC at the start of the month.
 - In light of the situation the CC called a public forum on the 26th of February where different parties presented their arguments. The CC has between 3 and 5 days to release a resolution on the issue. On the same day, the Appointments Committee for Public Prosecutor held their third session.

Throughout the month of February, human rights organizations, other Guatemalan civil society organizations and the international community expressed support for Claudia Paz y Paz. They drew attention to her record of excellence in carrying out her role and maintained that she should continue in the post until December, marking four years from the time when she was named.⁵ International social networks –CIFCA, CIDSE, FONGI and the International Platform Against Impunity– called on the international community to remain vigilant and to pay attention to how this process unfolds. They urged the international community to ensure that the Guatemalan State guarantee the capacities evident in the MP, and that it strengthen the relationship between this institution and the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG)⁶.

Other news

Law approved that makes placing physical objects on a road without authorization a criminal offence⁷

On the 18th of February the Congress approved a norm to regulate the movement of vehicles. According to the Explanation of Motives its objective is to "guarantee that all vehicles in the country can circulate without any impediment." Among other things, the law prohibits the placing of speed-bumps, barriers, and gates without authorization. The Law proposes a fine of between 1000 and 5000 Quetzales and imprisonment of up to a year for any individual who places obstacles on the road. The Law also modifies Article 158 of the Penal Code, stating that the same punishment is applicable "to those who instigate the placing of speed-bumps, barrel's, or other obstacles ... or those whose actions impede the removal of the same." According to the Human Rights Ombudsman Jorge de León Duque, this norm should be monitored carefully so that it is not "misinterpreted" and becomes unconstitutional. The right to assembly and the right to public protest, as guaranteed in Article 33 of the Constitution should be upheld in all cases.

The Minister for the Interior, Mauricio López Bonilla, believes the approval of this law is a positive step and said: "... in cases where just people are used to form a blockade, that is a matter of public disorder because they are limiting the right to freedom of movement. If they use objects to block free passage, according to this new law, we would be saying that they are committing a crime" explained López Bonilla.

In a press release, the Guatemalan Human Rights Convergence expressed concern over this law and called on Guatemalan civil society and the international community to take immediate action against the violation of human rights that this law represents in the context of the criminalization of the right to social protest.⁸

⁴ El Faro, "Dos dictámenes de la Corte Suprema concluyeron que fiscal Paz y Paz debe seguir hasta diciembre", 9.02.2014 <http://www.elfaro.net/es/201402/internacionales/14702/>

⁵ Prensa Libre, "Externan apoyo a Claudia Paz y Paz", Guatemala, 7.02.2014 http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/politica/Externan-apoyo-Paz_0_1080491956.html
El Periódico, "CICIG brinda apoyo a la fiscal general Claudia Paz y Paz", Guatemala, 7.02.2014 <http://www.elperiodico.com.gt/es/20140207/pais/242249/>

⁶ CIFCA, CIDSE, FONGI y Plataforma contra la Impunidad, "Es deber del Estado de Guatemala garantizar la independencia y transparencia en las Comisiones de Postulación", 14.02.2014 <http://www.cifca.org/spip.php?article289>

⁷ Prensa Libre, 19.02.2014 http://www.prensalibre.com/noticias/politica/Aprueban-multas-tapar-rutas_0_1088291198.html

⁸ Convergencia por los Derechos Humanos, "Criminalización de la manifestación. De piedras en el zapato a túmulos en el camino de la impunidad, el racismo y la exclusión", Guatemala, 20.02.2014. <http://es.scribd.com/doc/208425805/Comunicado-Criminalizacion-de-la-manifestacion-Convergencia-por-los-Derechos-Humanos-De-piedras-en-el-zapato-a-tumulos-en-el-camino-de-la-impuni>

Guatemala remembers the victims of its internal armed conflict⁹

Victims' families and human rights activists remembered those killed and disappeared in Guatemala between 1960 and 1996 with an offering of red carnations over an altar of pine needles and white rose petals in the Casa de la Memoria (House of Memory) to mark the National Day of Dignity for the Victims of the Internal Armed Conflict. "For us, the carnations symbolize the recognition of life. We don't seek to vindicate their death, disappearance or the pain of their torture, but to remember who they were" explained Calderón, an activist from H.I.J.O.S., an organization made up of the sons and daughters of individuals detained, disappeared and murdered during the conflict.

The commemoration, which has taken place every 25th of February since 2004, coincides with the date that the report "Guatemala, Memory of Silence" was first published in 1999 by the Historical Clarification Commission (CEH). The report was overseen by the United Nations and documented violations of human rights committed during the armed conflict, predominantly against the indigenous population, in which 93% of the crimes are attributed to the army and other security forces of the Guatemalan State.

Juan Francisco Soto, director of the Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH), the organization behind the creation of the museum, says that 15 years since the report, the Guatemalan State still has a huge debt to its victims.

2. ACCOMPANIMENT

PBI accompanies social organisations and individuals who have received threats for their work in the defence and promotion of human rights. In this context we are accompanying social processes in the fight against impunity, the issue of land and the negative impacts of globalisation on human rights.¹⁰

Throughout the month, we continued to accompany the **'New Day' Chortí Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCCND)**. On the 7th of February, we observed a gathering and blockade of the Jupilingo bridge in the Department of Chiquimula between the townships of Camotán (Jocotán), Chiquimula (Chiquimula) and El Florida (on the Honduran border). This activity was organized to protest the construction of a hydroelectric plant on the Jupilingo river in the Cajón del Rio zone. Communities from the area say that despite not having been informed or consulted on the project, the construction of the plant is already underway. During the activity we observed the presence of the current Mayor of Camotán, Byron González, who talked with the protesters at the blockade and promised that he would not grant any licences for hydroelectric projects. Specifically, he assured the protesters that during its next meeting, the municipal council would sign an agreement stating that it will not allow the construction of any hydroelectric plants on the Jupilingo river. They also would seek to annul any existing agreements in the Municipal archives that grant concessions for the construction of hydro electric dams or for mineral exploitation.

On the 18th of February we met with Omar Jerónimo, a member New Day, to follow up on defamations, intimidations and threats that he previously denounced and that continue to affect the organization and its members. Two days later, we visited the Matazano community, where locals shared their concerns about the current situation in the region.

In February we maintained regular contact and held a meeting with members of the **Twelve Communities of San Juan Sacatepéquez**. We also were present during two of their weekly meetings in Santa Fe Ocaña. On the 4th, we observed a gathering attended by several representatives of the Diplomatic Corps and of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and a delegation of community members from San Juan Sacatepéquez. The community members outlined the history of resistance to the construction of the cement plant, the concerns that the planned construction cause for the local community, and the attacks and intimidations that community members have suffered because of their opposition to the project. Specifically, the delegation expressed their concern for the campaign of judicial harassment against those who have protested the project, and called attention to several judicial processes and denouncements that have been brought against them. The delegation asked the international community to urge the Guatemalan State and National Authorities to comply with their obligations to its citizens, and to ensure that all state institutions consult with communities, refrain from making decisions that put their lives at risk, and defend the collective interests of the communities.

This month we visited the **Peaceful Resistance of La Puya** on five occasions, to make international presence visible at their permanent protest camp and in the area. The legal accusations and judicial processes against several of their members continue affecting the collective and the process of resistance that they maintain:

⁹ TIEMPO, 25.02.2014 <http://www.tiempo.hn/el-mundo/noticias/guatemala-recuerda-a-las-victimas-de-la-sangrienta-guerra-civil>

¹⁰ Puede consultar información general sobre el acompañamiento a las organizaciones y personas que acompañamos, en nuestro sitio web: <http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/field-projects/pbi-guatemala/who-we-accompany/>

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- On the 4th of February, we accompanied a delegation from the organization to the courts where we observed a hearing in which three of their members stand accused. The hearing was suspended due to the absence of the Public Prosecutor.
- On the 14th of February we accompanied members of the organization, again to observe a judicial hearing in which another four people stand accused. The inability to confirm the accreditation of the representative from the MP meant that the hearing was suspended yet again.
- On the 28th we observed the third hearing of the month. Evidence was presented against three members of the resistance movement who are accused of coercion, threats, and kidnapping. The date the 3rd of March was set to decide if the process will pass to trial.

Removal of machinery from the installations of the El Tambor mine at La Puya.

On the 23rd of February, P&F Contratistas that owns machinery inside the installations of El Tambor mine sent a letter to the Communities in Peaceful Resistance informing them of its intention to remove said machinery from the site given that it now has cut ties with the project. In the letter, P&F also asserted that it respects the position taken by the communities in resistance on this matter and that it has resolved not to involve itself in any other mining activity in the area.

The following day, we accompanied a delegation from the La Puya movement as they attended a meeting with representatives of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) where they agreed upon the conditions necessary for the removal of the machinery. There were members of several other Guatemalan civil society organizations in attendance: The Madre Selva Collective, The Unit For the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA), and The Centre for Legal, Environmental and Social Action (CALAS). Representatives of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the US NGO Guatemala Human Rights Commission (GHRC) were also present.

On the 26th and the 27th of February we observed the removal of the machinery as it passed the permanent protest camp at La Puya. There was a large delegation from the communities at the site who were accompanied by representatives of the PDH, the GHRC, UDEFEQUA and the media. On the 27th of February as all of the machinery was removed from the mine, employees of EXMINGUA, the local mining company through which the US mining company Kappes, Cassidy & Associates (KCA) operate, distributed leaflets claiming the Catholic Church has spoken in favour of the mining project.

Throughout the month, we maintained telephone contact with members of the **Association of Indigenous Women of Santa María de Xalapán in Jalapa (AMISMAXAJ)**, and we held two meetings with two different members of the organization. On the 14th of February we accompanied women from AMISMAXAJ during a workshop delivered by the Madre Selva Collective in Jalapa. During the event, discussion centred on issues affecting women human rights defenders and social movements in opposition to mining projects and hydro electric developments.

In February we continued to accompany the **Council of Cunén Communities (CCC)**. We maintained regular contact through weekly phone calls and held a meeting on the 25th of the month with several members of the Council. They continue to carry out their work and sustain their call for the right to be informed and consulted about projects that affect them in the region. They highlighted a context of high tension for their members and denounced pressure and intimidation from state institutions and authorities.

This month we remained in contact by telephone with the **Council of K'iche' Peoples (CPK)** on a weekly basis. On the 18th we accompanied one of the CPKs members, Lolita Chávez, to a meeting with the local Public Prosecutors Office (MP) in Santa Cruz del Quiché where she presented herself in order to respond to several accusations that have been made against her. We held two additional meetings with members of CPK on the 18th and the 25th of February, where they updated us on the organizations activities and shared their concerns about the intimidations and threats that they continue to experience as they carry out their work.

We remained in regular contact with members of the **Verapaz Union of Campesino Organisations (UVOC)** and have held several meetings with them during the month of February. During the activities of the organization and those of its members, there remains a constant concern about the intimidations and threats that they continue to experience especially in and around the estate of La Primavera, San Cristobal (Alta Verapaz). On the 3rd of February, we accompanied the organizations' lawyer Jorge Luis Morales as he travelled from the Capital to Cobán in order to attend a judicial hearing.

Seven individuals from the Estate of La Primavera had been summoned to the court, accused of kidnapping and of causing mild injuries to employees of the company Maderas Filitz S.A. during a visit they had made to the Estate in January 2012. The hearing was suspended due to the absence of the plaintiff's lawyers and of five of the accused. According to the UVOC, these absences are related to the strategies employed by the accusing party and the pressure by the company in the context of continued judicial harassment against the people of La Primavera who speak out against being uprooted from the land, forced into labour, and who denounce all types of aggression against them.

On the 3rd and the 4th of February we accompanied Jorge Luis Morales, Carlos Morales (the coordinator of the UVOC), and a delegation of community members to Purulhá (Alta Verapaz) where they met with representatives of the Data Provider on Land Registry (RIC), the Human Rights Ombudsman, and the Secretary for Agrarian Issues (SAA). They discussed themes related to the measurement of land, in particular, the process of measuring the communal land of the Mocoán community.

On the 7th of February we accompanied Jorge Luis and Carlos Morales to two communities in the area - San Nicolás and Nuevo Seamay where they presented the work of the UVOC and gave details about the legal processes affecting the communities who form part of UVOC.

On the 15th of February, two private security employees contracted by the company Eco-Tierra who operate in the Estate of La Primavera attempted to capture a woman from the Baleu community. She had seen them cutting down wood in the community without relevant permits and had questioned them on the matter. After the attempted aggression towards the woman, a shot was heard, an act that has been interpreted as one of intimidation according to local people. On the 17th of February we met with Carlos Morales who updated us on activities that the UVOC is planning. The next day we accompanied a delegation of community members from La Primavera to the regional office of the Human Rights Ombudsman in Cobán where they filed a complaint about the attack on the woman in Baleu. On the 19th of February in the Capital, we accompanied Jorge Luis and Carlos Morales with a delegation of community members from La Primavera to a meeting with the Secretary for Agrarian Issues (SAA) and later to a meeting with the National Coordinator of Campesino Organizations (CNOO). In both meetings, they spoke about access to land, the conflictive atmosphere affecting those communities who stand up for land rights, the criminalization of their activities - all of which affect members of UVOC. Later, we accompanied the delegation to the Office of the Public Prosecutor (MP) where they officially denounced the attack on the woman in Baleu.

We held meetings and made weekly visits to the headquarters of the **Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEQUA)** where we talked about their work and the context surrounding the attacks against human rights defenders in the Departments of Alta Verapaz, Santa Rosa, Chiquimula and Huehuetenango. On the 27th and 28th of February we accompanied UDEFEQUA to the gathering of the National Network of Human Rights Defenders. During this event, the participants reviewed the objectives of the network, they spoke about implementing a regional system of coordination amongst human rights defenders, and they identified priorities for the coming year focusing on the critical situation around security and protection for HRDs.

In February we continued our accompaniment of the **Human Rights Law Office**. We accompanied the lawyer Edgar Pérez Archila in his journeys and we regularly visited the headquarters of the Law Office. On the 14th and 15th we accompanied several members of the Law Office to El Estor where they carried out different activities aimed at collecting information about the massacre of campesinos in Pánzos in 1978. On the 20th of February we attended the official opening of the second office of the Bufete. On the 24th we also accompanied members of the firm to a hearing related to the "Cotzal case." The hearing did not take place due to the absence of the lawyer representing the defendant.

Throughout the month we maintained frequent contact by telephone and through weekly visits to the headquarters of the **National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA)**. Several members of the organization have suffered intimidations this month.

Follow up:

In February, we maintained telephone contact with the **Historical Archive of the National Police AHPN**. Between January 2009 and the 28th of February 2014, the Archive received over 9000 applications for digital copies of documents. The vast majority of petitions has come from the MP (3286), individuals (2573), the PDH (660), and the National Civil Police PNC (393)

as well as from other people and organizations. They have delivered a total of 261,598 images and documents to date.

3. INTERNATIONAL OBSERVATION

PBI Guatemala provides international observation of public events as requested by Guatemalan social organisations, to bring attention and international interest and to communicate outside the country what we observe.

On the 5th of February we observed a Judicial Hearing in the case of two employees of the Hidroelectric Santa Cruz accused of the attempted murder of two community members from **Santa Cruz Barillas in Huehuetenango**. During the hearing, evidence was presented from both the defendants and the plaintiffs. On the 21st of February, we observed a meeting among several organizations interested in the resistance movement in Barillas. We heard about the problems that have arisen and the conflict that continues affecting the community and its members who are in opposition to the construction of a hydroelectric dam, notably the problems of judicial harassment and criminalization.

Also on the 5th of February, we observed a meeting between the mayor, members of the Indigenous Council and representatives of the Community Development Committee (COCODE) in **Chuarancho** in the Department of Guatemala. All representatives asked that the mayor publish the results of the 2009 community consultation that showed the communities' rejection of the construction of hydroelectric projects in the area. They also outlined the environmental damages of hydroelectric projects and the threats suffered by members of the community who express opposition to it. The Mayor promised to publish the results of the Consultation before the end of February. On the same day, we observed another meeting in the community of **Los Jobos** where the participants again expressed their concern over the environmental impact of the proposed hydroelectric.

In the Capital city, we observed a protest outside of Congress buildings on the 10th and 11th of February, where civil society and human rights organizations called for the law to be upheld and opposed the proposed early dismissal of Claudia Paz y Paz as head of the Office of Public Prosecutions (MP) whose term is being debated at a judicial level (*see part 1, current situation*).

On the 21st we travelled to Zacapa in order to observe a **march** organized by the **Ecumenical and Pastoral Coordinator in Defence of Life** to protest the logging in the region that they consider to be illegal. In the end, the march was suspended.

On the 24th of February we observed a **press conference in the Constitutional Court (CC)** organized by the **Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH)**. The conference was held in commemoration of the publication of the report 15 years ago by the *Historical Clarification Commission* entitled "Guatemala, Memory of Silence".

The following day, we observed the journey of the **Memory Caravan**, organized by the **Genocide: Never Again Coordination** in commemoration of the Day of Dignity for victims of the internal armed conflict.

On the 26th, we observed a hearing **at the Constitutional Court** in which Claudia Paz y Paz presented her arguments against the Appeal for the legal protection of Constitutional Rights as brought against her by the lawyer Ricardo Sagastume who argues that her term as Attorney General should terminate on the 17th of May (*see Part 1, Current Situation*).

On the 28th we observed a meeting in the community of La Unión (Zacapa) organized by the **Ecumenical and Pastoral Coordinator in Defence of Life** that included the participation of 'New Day' Chortí Campesino Central Coordinator, the Madre Selva Collective, and the National Resistance Front (FNL). The central issues discussed were the conflict that arises from a lack of consultation over hydroelectric and mining projects and the problem of deforestation in the area.

4. POLITICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

Meetings with the diplomatic corps, international organisations, and Guatemalan authorities

Meetings with national and international authorities are an important tool for PBI to make known our objectives and work. In these meetings,

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where this is necessary, we express concerns in a restrained way about critical situations we know first-hand from the work we do on the field.

This month we met with several members **of the International Corps and other international entities** present in Guatemala. On the 18th of February, we met with **Kristine Erlandsson-Juárez, Second Secretary of the Swedish Embassy**, where we discussed, among other things, the situation in Monte Olivo (Cobán, Alta Verapaz). With respect to this situation and that of other community protests in defence of the land and against the exploitation of natural resources, we highlighted our concern over the lack of adequate responses from local authorities responsible for the protection of its citizens in the face of physical attacks and judicial harassment. In particular, we discussed the problems faced by members of the 'New Day' Chortí Campesino Central Coordinator, in which several of its members are affected by judicial charges being brought against them. We also shared with them several possibilities for the Diplomatic Corps to become actively involved in the protection of human rights defenders under threat.

On the same day, together with several representatives from local NGOs, we met with **Jürg Benz, the new Ambassador of Switzerland**. After explaining the work we carry out in Guatemala, we discussed the problem of criminalization of social protest as denounced by local human rights and civil society organizations, and the ongoing public defamation of the international community in Guatemala. At the end of the month we held a second meeting with the Ambassador, where we entered into more details about specific concerns we have around the situation faced by the 12 Communities of San Juan Sacatepéquez and The Peaceful Resistance of La Puya. Both organizations are affected severely by ongoing judicial harassment. We expressed concern about the continued suspension of hearings and legal processes, the lengthy and time consuming proceedings they face, and failures on the part of local courts to adhere to due process.

On the 20th of February we met with **Matthias Sonn, German Ambassador, y Artur Brunner, Advisor and Joint Chief of Mission**. We discussed the current situation in the Guatemala, in particular the debate around the term to be served by the Attorney General. We also highlighted the criminalization of social protest, the slander of human rights defenders, and negative items in the press regarding the international community who support them. We outlined our concerns about members of the 12 communities of San Juan Sacatepéquez in detail.

Throughout the month of February we have met with representatives of **Guatemalan authorities and institutions**.

On the 10th of February we met with **Oswaldo Enriquez, Director of the Institute of Analysis of Attacks against Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala** at the Ministry of the Interior. We discussed the militarization of the area surrounding La Puya, intimidations denounced by members of the **Council of K'iche' Peoples**, and attacks against community members in Monte Olivo.

In a meeting on the 12th of February with **Mario Minera, the Director of the Unit for Mediation, Conflict Resolution, and Public Policy at the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) and Claudia Lopez, Assistant Attorney**, we highlighted the judicial processes affecting accompanied organizations in the East and in Alta Verapaz. We also expressed concern over lack of institutional support from entities responsible for the protection of human rights in both Monte Olivo and the Peten.

The following week, in another meeting with staff from the PDH, **Mario Minera, Priscila García and Francisco Guaré**, we discussed attacks on community leaders in San Juan Sacatepéquez who have been negatively affected by the conflict generated due to the construction of a cement plant in the area.

On the 17th of February we met with **Miguel Ángel Barcarcel, Presidential Advisor on Dialogue and Negotiation**. Among the concerns highlighted were the difficulties observed in processes of negotiation over land - as in the case of the UVOC and SAA and the Estate of La Primavera - and the constant fear of eviction lived by communities; the difficulty in reaching formal agreements at Negotiating Tables; the situation in Monte Olivo, where the community have asked for an investigation into recent attacks against community members and the murder of two children in August 2013; and the military presence in La Puya.

In **Chiquimula**, we met with **Roel Pérez, Governor of Chiquimula** on the 19th of February and the following day with **Elda Morataya y Julián García** from the **Presidential Commission for Human Rights in the municipality of Camotán**. In both meetings, we presented our work, that of our accompanied organizations, and the observations we undertake in the East of the country. We also expressed concern about the attacks and intimidations denounced by social organizations in

the wake of their opposition to proposed hydroelectric developments.

Meetings with civil society organisations

The team in the field meets regularly with civil society organisations, with the aim of monitoring the situation of human rights defenders' human rights, to inform each other about the work being done and to gather information to help develop analysis of the political situation. We coordinate aspects related to the field of international involvement.

In February, we were in direct contact with several organizations and individuals from Guatemalan civil society. At different moments this month, we visited the offices of the **Madre Selva Collective** and **The Women's Sector**.

On the 4th of February we met with **Jorge López** from the **Organization to Support an Integral Sexuality in the Face of AIDS (OASIS)**, who shared his analysis of the persecution to which members of his organization have been victim since the beginning of the year.

In the middle of February we met with **Teodoro Maas**, a member of the organization **APROVA SANK**, along with four people from the communities of **La Ceiba and Valle Verde** (Alta Verapaz). The situation faced by HRDs from the **Monte Olivo** region and the threats and judicial harassment that they face continue affecting community members and remain a constant concern. On the 25th we met with a delegation of community members who had travelled to the capital from Monte Olivo that updated us on information from the region.

On the 21st of February we met with **José Pilar Álvarez Cabrera**, **Pastor from the Lutheran Church in Guatemala (ILUGUA)**. This month he denounced intimidations and defamation against him because of his involvement in the defence of the land rights, natural resources and the environment. Threats are associated with his work with **the Ecumenical and Pastoral Coordinator in Defence of Life**.

We also met with international organizations who work in Guatemala. Throughout the month we maintained contact with the **Coordination of International Accompaniment in Guatemala (ACOGUATE)** and **The Forum of International Non Governmental Organizations in Guatemala (FONGI)**.

5. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA OUTSIDE GUATEMALA

Outside the country we constantly develop and strengthen the network of support for the Guatemalan PBI project, as this is one of the essential tools necessary to protect defenders of human rights. Regional Representatives, the Project Office Coordinator and other members of the committee and the Project Office and national groups of PBI, conduct public relations campaigns with many NGOs, agencies and national governments, parliamentarians and others. In this context we develop actions and public relations campaigns, and / or advocacy aimed at protecting defenders of human rights.

On the 10th of February the European Representative of the Guatemalan PBI Project met with **Patricia Bocchi**, from the Human Rights Department of the European External Action Service (EEAS) of the European Union. On the 19th, along with her colleagues from the PBI projects in Colombia and Mexico, they met with **Bert Theuermann**, the director of **COHOM** (the Human Rights working group of the Council of the EU) and with **Juilta Bas**, responsible for Latin American issues in the Department of Human Rights in the **EEAS**.

The following day, during the annual gathering of **human rights representatives from EU delegations overseas**, the European Representatives of the PBI projects in Guatemala, Mexico and Colombia presented their findings and experiences on the implementation of the **EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders** in the countries where PBI provides international accompaniment.

On the 25th of February, the European Representative was in the **Netherlands** during a meeting between Lorena Cabnal (member of AMISMAXAJ), Lolita Chávez (from the Council of K'iche' Peoples (CPK), members of PBI Netherlands and other Dutch NGOs along with several representatives of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs –Frank Huisingsh (Policy Officer – Multilateral Affairs and Human Rights), Nina van Lanschot (Policy Officer - Gender Division), and Ismail Moalim (Policy Officer - Peace and Security).

6. NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In this section we publish statements (some abbreviated) from human rights organisations in which they express their concerns regarding recent events.

Petición creada por PIDAASSA Guatemala y la Iglesia Luterana (ILUGUA) Por el derecho y la defensa de nuestra madre tierra y territorio

Denuncia pública: Por medio de la presente miembros del Programa de Intercambio, Diálogo y Asesoría en Agricultura Sostenible y Soberanía Alimentaria PIDAASSA GUATEMALA- nos solidarizamos con la resistencia pacífica por la defensa y protección de las montañas y las fuentes de agua en el macizo montañoso El Merendón que realizan nuestros compañeros y nuestras compañeras de Zacapa y Chiquimula específicamente con la comunidad La Trementina, ya que con fecha 20 de febrero del año en curso el Señor Rigoberto Ramírez Ortiz presidente de ACIDEA y el señor Agripino Ramírez Presidente del COCODE de la comunidad de Los Achiotos presentaron una denuncia ante las autoridades locales en contra de nuestro compañero el reverendo José Pilar Alvarez Cabrera, pastor de la Iglesia Luterana ILUGUA, activista defensor de los derechos humanos de comunidades campesinas e indígenas Chortí y defensor de los bienes naturales, los bosques, el agua y la biodiversidad en las montañas del Merendón en Zacapa y Chiquimula. El Instituto Nacional de Bosques INAB autorizó varias licencias para talar los bosques que protegen los nacimientos de agua que es la única y principal fuente que beneficia a unos 300 mil habitantes aproximadamente. Las licencias fueron dadas a José Juan Olavarrueth de Finca Tachoró, José María Perdomo y David Osorio en las inmediaciones de las aldeas Chuntuy y Riachuelitos, Wood mizer INMASE, Industrias Madereras, Servicios y Eulogio Guerra en el Cerro de Los Ángeles, Los Achiotos, Zacapa.

Los bosques proporcionan vida y el liquido vital del agua a las comunidades cercanas, de continuar con estas actividades, muy pronto estaremos en condiciones desastrosas. Las organizaciones que integramos el PIDAASSA GUATEMALA nos solidarizamos y apoyamos al reverendo Jose Pilar en su labor de ser un acompañante de las comunidades y aclaramos que él no defiende ningún interés político a su favor, simplemente defiende la vida humana y la madre tierra. Ante esto rechazamos esa demanda que se ha hecho al reverendo José Pilar en su contra y exigimos a Rigoberto Ramírez Ortíz y Agripino Ramírez el respeto a las comunidades a defender sus bienes naturales.

*RESTAURAR LOS BOSQUES, RESTAURAR EL AGUA, PRESERVAR LA VIDA
"Digamos no a las denuncias a los protectores de los bienes naturales"*

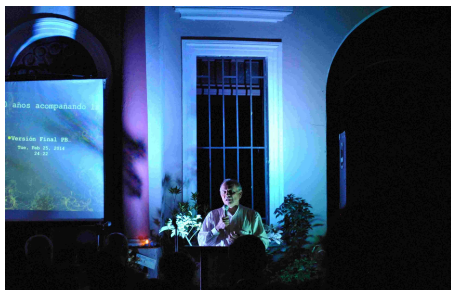
Guatemala 25 de febrero 2014

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT: CELEBRATING THE 30th ANNIVERSARY OF PBI GUATEMALA



On the 25th of February we commemorated the 30th anniversary of PBI in Guatemala, which actually came to pass in 2013. We organized a public activity in Casa Cervantes, and the event coincided with national commemoration of 15 years since the publication of the report on historical clarification "Guatemala, Memory of Silence" and the National Day of Dignity for victims of the internal armed conflict. Countless individuals and members of civil society organizations from both the Capital and the interior of the country were in attendance, along with representatives of international organizations, the Diplomatic Corps, and international human rights entities.

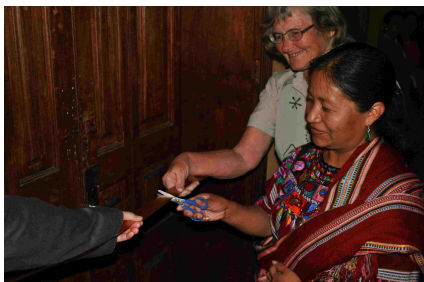
Brigadas Internacionales de Paz _____ Peace Brigades International



Following a warm welcome to all our guests, music from Fernando López, and an opening presentation by PBI, activities began which included: the presentation of a video about PBI's 30 year presence in Guatemala; speeches from well known Guatemalan human rights defenders Amilcar Méndez, who was a leader of the Council of Ethnic Communities "Runujel Junam" (CERJ), and Feliciano Macario, active member of the National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA); speeches from members of the international community in Guatemala, Alberto Brunori, representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and Stella Zervoudaki, Ambassador

of the European Union; and finally, the opening of a photography exhibition entitled "30 years of Peace Brigades International in Guatemala" that will remain at Casa Cervantes (5a. calle 5-18, zona 1) until the 9th of April 2014. It is also available for viewing online: <http://pbiguatemala30aniversario.wordpress.com/>

The event itself and all of the materials that PBI presented were brought about with the support of the European Instrument for Democracy & Human Rights (EIDHR) of the European Union.



Along with illustrating the story of PBI in Guatemala, the activity was intended to show the role that Guatemalan social movements and civil society organizations have played in the defence of human rights and to publicly recognize the valuable work of human rights defenders who despite all of the attacks they continue to experience, continue to fight for the such rights to be respected and realized.

"The members of the international community who are present here today have a huge responsibility in the current context of Guatemala: you continue to represent a vital measure of support in the recognition of the work of human rights defenders and give back up to the organizations that accompany them. We ask that you continue to play this fundamental role in the protection of human rights.



The improvement of the human rights situation also depends on the commitments and fulfilment of obligations by Guatemalan institutions and public authorities. This includes the recognition on their part of the legitimacy of international accompaniment.



The story of Peace Brigades International in the country will always be directed by you, the human rights defenders here today. On a daily basis you inspire us with the strength you show in carrying out your work, despite the constant violations of human rights and the impact and consequences in your lives and in the lives of your families. Despite all of this, you continue to fight for a more equal Guatemala that is more open and participative." (Excerpt from PBI opening presentation, 25.02.2014).

PBI Team in Guatemala: Stephen Bradford (USA), Valentina Caprotti (Italy), Rubén Carricondo Sánchez (Spain), Erika Martínez García (Spain), Danilo Guerrero Díaz (Chile), Sanne de Swart (The Netherlands), Felix Weiss (Germany), Kim-Mai Vu (Switzerland), Adam Paul Lunn (England) y Katharina Ochsendorf (Germany).

The following people voluntarily contributed to translating this publication into English: Karen Jeffares and Alice Schuda

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GUATEMALA PROJECT

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