



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALAN PROJECT

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

Congress of the Republic Approves 2009 State Budget and Solidarity Tax

Guatemala, 22.11.2008 (PL, EP, SV, TD).- On Friday, 21 November, Congress members concluded the debate on State Income and Expenditure 2009, with a total budget of 49,723 million quetzals. They also approved the creation of the Solidarity Tax (ISO), at a rate of one per cent, and a tax package that now awaits debate of each draft article and approval of the final wording.

IMPUNITY

Activist leader denounces armed attack

Guatemala, 05.11.2008 (FD).- Arturo Albizures, of the COMUNICARTE Association, reported that more than 50 gunshots were fired at his home on Thursday 30 October. He said the attack reminded him of the dark times of the past, when armed units exacted state-sponsored repression by employing extreme violence against those who dared to raise their voices against injustice.

COPREDEH President's house raided

Guatemala, 13.11.2008 (Gobierno de la República).- The Presidential Human Rights Commission (COPREDEH), the Secretary of the Peace (SEPAZ) and the National Reparation Programme (PNR), denounced events of 7 November, when unidentified persons invaded the house of the President of COPREDEH, Ruth del Valle. According to the issued statement, the intruders had waited until nobody was in the house, and had thoroughly searched the belongings of Ms del Valle, but left untouched those of her partner.

Human Rights Ombudsman acts against Police director over passive and ommissive attitude to violence

Guatemala, 11.11.2008 (PL).- The Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) sought an injunction against the director of the National Civil Police (PNC), Marlene Blanco Lapola, over her "passive and acquiescent attitude" for neither locating, detaining or prosecuting those responsible for criminal acts committed primarily in San Vicente Pacaya and Villa Nueva (dept of Guatemala), Palin y Puerto San José (Escuintla), Puerto Barrios (Izabal) and San Lucas Tolimán (Sololá). The First Court of Appeal provisionally granted the injunction and ordered the official to "take all measures" to end the reported criminal acts.

Death squads operating freely

Guatemala, 24.11.2008 (PL).- 2008 has seen at least 28 executions at the hands of heavily-armed groups, threatening murder, who extort protection monies from neighbourhood residents in return for "security services". These groups terrorise local populations with the distribution of blacklists of presumed delinquents, threatened with "elimination". Unlike events in the past, the executioners are not disorganised residents who decide to "take justice into their own hands"; these are organised groups that with premeditation are applying the death penalty indiscriminately and at their whim.

LAND

Changes in production and use of land provokes food insecurity

Alta Verapaz, 05.11.2008 (AC).- Aurelia Tot, the departmental delegate of the Secretariat for Food Security and Nutrition, condemned the changes in production and the use of land in the areas of the river Polochic and the Northern Transverse

Zone (FTN), which have caused increased food insecurity and nutritional deficiencies in the municipalities of Cahabón and Sanahú (Alta Verapaz). The cultivation of maize has been replaced with production of sugar cane in the Polochic area and African palm in the FTN zone.

Disturbances and injuries follow highway blockades demanding land and agrarian reform

Guatemala, 20.11.2008 (EP, PL, SV, ND, AD, LH).- Members of the National Coordinating body of *Campesino* Organisations (CNOOC), the *Campesino* Unity Committee (CUC) and the *Campesino* Development Committee (CODECA) blockaded the South and West highways to demand land and agrarian reform, electoral promises that the government has neglected. The blockade, which caused confrontations between *campesinos* and security forces, has resulted in several injuries and arrests, and allegations of looting of a number of businesses.

Platform promotes approval of Rural Development Law

Guatemala, 21.11.2008 (CA).- The creation of a Rural Development Ministry, promotion of productivity in agricultural communities and the transfer of state land to *campesinos* for cultivation, are three key features of the National Rural Development System Bill, which has been developed over six months by more than 20 indigenous and *campesino* organisations, working alongside government institutions, and submitted to the president, Álvaro Colom, on 11 November.

GLOBALISATION

Social organisations accuse the State over violation of the rights of Indigenous Peoples

Guatemala, 04.11.2008 (AC).- The National Coordinating Body of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA), the Association of Communities for Development and the Defence of Natural Resources and other organisations have denounced before the United Nations Committee for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) racist state practices that continue to affect indigenous communities. The organisations presented three prominent cases of transnational projects in indigenous territories; the construction of the Xalalá dam in Ixcán, Quiché; the operations of the mining company Maya Nickel, in Cahabón, Alta Verapaz; and the installation of a factory of the Progreso Cement company, in San Juan Sacatepequez, Guatemala. According to the social organisations, the State has not only granted licences to these companies, but crucially gave scant consideration to the rights of the communities affected and their own complaints.

More opposition to mining

El Estor, 05.11.2008 (PL).- Representatives of 16 Community Development Councils (COCODES) opposed the exploration of the Las Torres and Doña Tomasa hills in El Estor, Izabal, by the Maya Nickel company. The councils' representative Miguel Quim said that they had asked the company to halt the exploratory work and any related studies, for fear that these activities could contaminate the tributaries of the rivers. Guatemala, 12.11.2008 (PL).- At the same time, business owners in the El Estor municipality issued a press release expressing their opposition to the temporary suspension of the Phoenix nickel extraction project undertaken by the Canadian company HudBay Minerals Inc, claiming that the project brought with it development and important changes to the community of El Estor.

Bidding for construction of hydroelectric project declared abortive

Guatemala, 07.11.2008 (SV).- The construction of the Xalalá hydroelectric power station has attracted no interest from the businesses who had acquired the tender specifications. The only company that tendered for the project was the Brazilian corporation Odebrecht, but it announced its withdrawal from the process due to the lack of governmental support in the face of sustained community opposition to the construction of the hydroelectric project. The corporation also cited a change in investment priorities caused by the drop in global financial liquidity. Having declared the tender process abortive, the president of the National Electricity Institute (INDE) said there were two options to choose from: invite more tenders in the coming months or seek another entity, such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, to take on the project,

Maquilas (garment factories) violate women's rights, says Human Rights Ombudsman

Guatemala, 18.11.2008 (PL).- The Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) said that one of the principal problems facing women in maquilas (garment factories) in Guatemala was psychological coercion: forcing women to accept less than the legal minimum wage and to relinquish their employment rights "by mutual agreement" in superficially conciliatory meetings. The owners of some companies which have been closed due to presumed bankruptcy have opened new businesses under different names, thus avoiding their obligation to pay employees' benefits.

Sources: Agencia Cerigua (AC), Centro de Estudios de Guatemala (CEG), Diario de Centro América (CA), La Hora (LH), Prensa Libre (PL), El Periódico (EP), Siglo Veintiuno (SV).

2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: IN GUATEMALA

Team: Wiebke Schramm (Germany), Jacqueline Benfield (UK), Maria Giovanna Tejido Vasquez (Spain), Caroline Tessier (Canada), Silvia Weber (Germany), Jean-Jacques Ambresin (Switzerland), Valérie Elsig (Switzerland).

2.1 MEETINGS WITH AUTHORITIES AND MEMBERS OF THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Meetings with authorities and members of the diplomatic corps in Guatemala are essential components of PBI's work, enabling us to make known our objectives and our way of working. Through these meetings, when necessary, we can also confidentially express our concerns about critical situations of which we have first hand knowledge through our work in the field. During November, meetings were held with the following authorities:

Diplomatic Corps:

- Jean-Pierre Villard, Swiss Ambassador

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Marcia Alejandra Sobenes García, Vice Minister of Natural Resources, Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources (MARN), Guatemala
- Rolando García, Coordinator of the Environmental Management Section, Jocotán Municipality, Chiquimula
- Rigoberto Cal Cal – Deputy Mayor of Santa Cruz, Alta Verapaz
- Erick Letona Villatoro, Auxiliary of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Huehuetenango
- Wilson del Valle, National Civil Police (PNC), Huehuetenango
- Rudy Gómez Martínez, Concejal Primero, Municipality of Huehuetenango, Huehuetenango
- Marcus Zander, Peace Civil Service, Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Poptún, Petén
- Gonzalo Palacios, Auxiliary of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Poptún, Petén
- Rudel Álvarez, Gobernador, Flores, Petén
- José Estuardo Puga Castellanos, Auxiliary of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Santa Elena, Petén
- Iván Martínez and Miluva Segura Baños, FONTIERRAS (Land Fund), Petén
- Claudia Mariela López Díaz, Regional Director, National Protected Areas Council (CONAP), San Benito, Petén
- Giovanni Francisco Soto Santos, Inspector General of Work, Ministry of Work, Guatemala

We also attended the following celebrations:

- Reception at the German Embassy, visit of Karin Kortnamm, Parliamentary Secretary of State of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development

2.2 MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The PBI Guatemala Project team holds regular meetings with civil society organisations. This enables us to monitor the situation of human rights defenders and to exchange information on the work being carried out, as well as to gather information which helps us to develop our analysis of the internal political situation. During November meetings were held with the following organisations:

Civil Society Organisations:

- Rafael Gonzáles, *Campesino* Unity Committee (CUC)
- Bernardo Caal, Oxilaju Be Association, Cahabón, Alta Verapaz
- Johanna Cab, Catholic Social Ministry of Cobán – Human Rights Programme, Alta Verapaz
- Mariano Calel, Association for Justice, Nueva Linda, Retalhuleu
- Vitolino Similox, President of the Ecumenical Council of Guatemala (CEG)
- Rafael Antonio Sánchez Morales, Legal Advisor, FESTRAS (Federated Union Food, Agro-Industry and similar workers)
- Olimpia Chapá, Iliana Tzin, Ixquik Women, San Benito, Petén
- Juan Ramón Girón, ACOFOP (Association of Forest Communities of Peten), San Benito, Petén
- Sandra Rangel, Director, SUCHILMA (Union of Tree-Rubber and Wood Workers), San Benito, Petén
- Javier Márquez, Director, Defenders of the Environment, Santa Elena, Petén
- Delfine Tutcoc, Ixmucané, Santa Elena, Petén
- Jesús Guerra, "The Other" Cooperative, Flores, Petén
- Beatrice Navarijo, Catholic Social Ministry, Santa Elena, Petén
- José Xoj y Ana Caal Xi, Association of Indigenous Campesino Communities for Development in Petén (ACDIP) and National Coordinator of Campesino Organizations (CNOC), Santa Elena, Petén
- Roan Balas, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Flores, Petén

- Martín Jiménez, Alliance for Life and Peace, and member of management board of the New Horizons cooperative, Petén
- Vinicio Mejía y Marconi Segura, Association of University Students (AEU), Flores, Petén
- Azucena Aguilar, Global Lutheran Federation, Santa Elena, Petén
- Rosa María Chan, ProPetén Foundation, Flores, Petén
- Agustín Tebalán, Petén Front Against Dams, Flores, Petén
- Irene Manrique y Dania García, Tropico Verde, Flores, Petén
- Giovanni Tzin Cordon, ADECOP (Association for Development and Progress of Peten), Poptún, Petén
- Neremías Estrada Amézquita, manager of MANMUNISURP (Community of Municipalities of Peten), Poptún, Petén

International Organisations and Agencies:

- Coordinator of International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG), Guatemala City
- Human Rights Commission of the Forum of International Organisations (FONGI), Guatemala City
- Robert Rose, German Cooperation Service
- Michael Sosa, Médecins Sans Frontières
- Montserrat Prieto, World Without War, Global March coordinator

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENTS

Since 13th May 2005 we have accompanied **Carlos Morales**, leader of the **Union of Campesino Organisations for the Verapaces (UVOC)**, as well as other members of the organisation. In November, we maintained contact with members of the organisation, accompanying them in the roundtable land negotiations in Alta Verapaz. We also carried out a visit to the La Moca Estate, to follow up on the situation of the families and carry out interviews with leaders of this community. At a general level, the high level of violence in Alta Verapaz continues to be of concern.

Background: UVOC is a campesino organisation in the Verapaces (the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz) and works principally on access to land for campesinos and providing support in the process of legalisation of the communities' titles to land. UVOC also offers training for communities affiliated with UVOC and supports development projects within those communities. For the next two years, UVOC will act as coordinating organisation of the National Coordinating body of Campesino Associations (CNOC). On 11 November 2008, CNOC submitted the National Rural Development System Bill to Álvaro Colom's government.

Carlos Morales, leader of UVOC, has been a victim of death threats, acts of intimidation and persecution by unknown individuals. Due to an increase of personal death threats at the end of April 2005, which led to a genuine fear for his life, Carlos Morales was forced into hiding in Guatemala City for a month, which was made possible with the support of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH). Following this, he requested 24 hour accompaniment from Peace Brigades International. In January 2006, Carlos Morales experienced surveillance on the block where he lives with his family. The situation in some communities affiliated with UVOC continues to be delicate: in February and April 2006, the campesino families that live in the La Moca Estate were violently evicted, leaving several people with gunshot wounds. In July 2006 there was a confrontation between two groups of campesinos leaving one dead and 39 injured of the evicted campesinos. The La Moca campesinos continue to live on the edge of the highway while negotiations at the national roundtable for agrarian conflict resolution continue with the owners of the estate and the authorities, in order to find a place for them to live. The case has been prioritised as urgent due to the situation of extreme poverty in which the families are living.

We have been accompanying the **Association of Friends of Lake Izabal (ASALI)** and **Eloyda Mejía**, the organisation's Legal Representative, since 21st February 2004, when threats against her worsened. We accompany Eloyda and other members of the association in the Department of Izabal during their activities and meetings with communities concerned about mining activities in the area. During November we maintained contact with ASALI, now that the Guatemalan Nickel Company has officially announced the closure of the Phoenix Project in El Estor.

Background: ASALI is concerned about the negative effects of mining activity in the region of El Estor, Izabal and also by the extensive agricultural use of the cultivation of fruit and the production of biofuels such as sugar and African palm. The companies active in the region are the Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN), which is a subsidiary of the Canadian company Skye Resources Inc. recently acquired by HudBay Minerals Inc., MayaNiquel and Nicromet, with majority shareholders BHP Billington of the United Kingdom.

Eloyda Mejía has suffered a number of threats as a result of her work. On 21st February 2004, during a conference on the future of the lake in El Estor, Izabal, she received yet more serious threats, which she reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH). In February 2006 Eloyda Mejía's restaurant wall was graffitied with the words "Yes to CGN" (Guatemalan Nickel Company). Since late 2006 Eloyda Mejía has had to deal with a legal process accusing her of usurping lands. This legal action is seen by her as a

form of persecution and intimidation intended to force her to abandon her work against the mining company CGN in El Estor. In the months of January and February 2007 we accompanied Eloyda and ASALI during a worsening of the situation in El Estor, after a tense situation arose between groups of campesinos that had occupied lands, CGN and state actors who wished to remove them. In October 2007, Eloyda Mejía received a threatening letter that mentioned her and other active members of civil society organisations in Izabal as ‘personas non gratas’ in the town of El Estor and as enemies of the town and the State. The letter mentioned that the law of “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” would be applied.

The **National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA)**. Since August 2003 we have periodically accompanied the association with visits to its offices and to exhumations and burials in rural clandestine cemeteries. After seeing an increase in surveillance since December 2006, we regularly have visited the organisation’s headquarters in the capital, continuing to do so in November, as well as accompanying its members to an exhumation in Chimaltenango.

Background: CONAVIGUA facilitates the process of exhumations and inhumations in various departments throughout Guatemala, mostly in Quiché, Chimaltenango, and the Verapaces, as part of their efforts for the recuperation of the collective memory of Guatemala’s recent troubled history. This process provokes tense situations in these small rural communities between victims and perpetrators, and the women of CONAVIGUA receive threats and intimidation to stop them from continuing this work.

The **Organisation to Support an Integrated Sexuality to Confront AIDS (OASIS)** is an organisation which works with HIV/AIDS education and prevention, as well as promoting and protecting the rights of gays, lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people. In particular, we accompany **Zulma**, a member of OASIS and witness to the assassination of a sex worker. In November we have been following their tour of Europe (organised in coordination with PBI country groups in Europe), as well as maintaining regular visits to the offices of OASIS.

Background: On 17th December 2005, Paulina, a transgender worker was killed, the seventh murder of a transgender worker that year. Zulma was present when the crime was committed, and was seriously injured during the incident. She is a witness to the murder of Paulina, accusing members of the National Civil Police (PNC) of the killing. OASIS reported the case to the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP) in order to obtain justice for the killing, and has been awarded precautionary security measures for Zulma and the organisation by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH). However, members of the organisation continue to be subjected to harassment and threats, and Jorge López, Executive Director of OASIS, reported that he was pursued by a police car during the night of 22nd January 2006. Given the few advances made in the case in the Guatemalan courts, OASIS wishes to bring it to the attention of the CIDH with the support of the Centre for Justice and International Law (CEJIL). In August, the MP reopened the case.

Lesbiradas. We began accompanying the organisation in July of this year after the daughter of one of its members, also a human rights activist, was the victim of serious direct acts of intimidation with threats against her life by different State security agents. At the start of November, when they were returning from the Second Latin American Summit in San Salvador, members of the organization experienced problems at the border, where they were apparently watched by the bi-national police over a period of 4 hours. On this occasion, we maintained close contact with them, and facilitated contact with the Human Rights Ombudsman, who accompanied them to the Guatemalan capital without further incident. During November we have also accompanied them to the Festival of the Woman in Huehuetenango, where they conducted various activities with other women’s movements. The organisation’s security situation appears to be more stable.

Background: The Lesbiradas collective is involved in the defence and promotion of human rights of Guatemalan lesbian women, promoting among other things, the self-determination of one’s body and sexuality, for lesbians in their struggle against an exclusive, patriarchal system and particularly the discrimination and systematic violence that they face. The two women that we have been accompanying participate in various social movements, for which on three occasions in July, one of the activists was directly threatened with death at gunpoint by agents of the PNC on July 21, 2008. The events were denounced to the Public Prosecutor’s Office (MP) and to the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) as well as to the Human Rights Defence Workers Protection Agency (UDEFEQUA). In principle, these threats relate to the women’s activism and for Lesbiradas, it is proof that a strategy of social cleansing exists in the country.

Association for the Protection of Montaña de las Granadillas. Since August 2008, we have accompanied this Association from the department of Zacapa after several of its members received death threats for their work to promote the designation of the area of Montaña de las Granadillas as a protected area. In November, we observed a non-violent rally outside the offices of the Zacapa municipality to denounce the blocking of resident communities’ access to the mountain by some of the region’s landowners.

Background: The association was created six years ago, when a group of residents realised that the ecosystem of

the mountain was in danger due to logging, monoculture, and the extreme increase in cattle-farming. It was not only the mountain that was disappearing: they were alarmed above all by the disappearance of the water reserves, given that all of the region's water comes from the mountain's forests. The organisation sought the support of the Lutheran Church and the Madre Selva Collective. These organizations carried out an analysis of the deterioration of the area, and found that the lower part of the mountain had lost 70% of forest cover due to illegal logging and inadequate regional application of the Forestry Law. Now the principal objective is to protect 20-30% of the remaining forest and promote reforestation. The association's members want to convert the mountain into a protected area but this proposal has proven difficult and dangerous because of the economic interests involved. The threats began when the association tried to denounce the illegal timber trade.

The **Association of Mayan Lawyers and Notaries of Guatemala**. In November we began accompanying the Association to follow-up the Alert initiated in July, and the situation in San Juan Sacatepéquez. We also continued with our frequent contact with members of the Association and carried out meetings with Amílcar Pop and Carmela Curup.

Background: The Association of Mayan Lawyers and Notaries of Guatemala supports and advises vulnerable indigenous leaders and mayors in their work in defence of human rights and indigenous rights, above all in the area of the defence of natural resources. The 80 members of the Association provide legal and political support in various departments of the country. As members and representatives of the organisation, Amílcar Pop, Carmela Curup and Mario Saper began to receive threats and intimidations while providing legal advice to the communities in the municipality of San Juan Sacatepéquez, regarding the establishment of a popular consultation regarding the cement works proposed by the Progress Cement company in the area. The threats culminated on 2 August with the attempted attack on the life of Amílcar Pop as he left a meeting regarding the staying of proceedings brought by the company against a community leader of San Juan Sacatepéquez. According to the Unit of Protection of Human Rights Defenders (report no. 10-2008, UDEFEGUA): "It is presumed that this attack occurred in the context of intimidatory actions that seek to limit the right of the communities to resist the installation of a cement factory in their community".

2.4 FOLLOW-UP

The **Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities (AGAAI)**. After a break-in of the office of AGAAI on 20th March we provided accompaniment through regular visits to the office and phone calls. In November we continued our contact with Carlos with phone calls and a meeting, as well participating in the Latin American Forum of Local Governments and Indigenous Territories.

Background: Carlos Guarquez has suffered from various forms of threats, accusations, and intimidations because of his work rejecting the Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) and mining activities. On 25th March 2005, in the village of El Tablón, Sololá, his vehicle was doused in petrol and set on fire by unknown individuals. Death threats specifically naming Carlos Guarquez, Dominga Vásquez, the then Indigenous Mayoress of Sololá, and her husband, Alfonso Guarquez, were found scattered around the vehicle. Part of the threat stated: "For your stupid meddling in society... tomorrow will be the day you disappear from this world.." As a result of this threat PBI activated its Support Network inside Guatemala. On 20th March 2007, AGAAI's office was broken into by unknown individuals who took only documentation and the petty cash box. The association denounced this incident as a clear act of intimidation against workers and members of AGAAI for their work in supporting and accompanying the mayors and indigenous authorities struggling for the protection of the land, and reported the act to the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH).

The **Women's Sector**. We began accompaniment in June 2006, following various break-ins at the organisation's office. After several months, its security situation had improved sufficiently so that we could transfer the status of the accompaniment to that of follow-up. In November, we continued contact with the organisation's members through visits and phone calls to their office.

Background: The Women's Sector is an umbrella organisation for women's associations that works for women's economic development, in the struggle against violence against women, and denounces impunity and the murder of women (feminicide). In less than 10 days, between the end of May and the beginning of June 2006, the headquarters of the Women's Sector were broken into twice. The first time the intruders stole telephones and money and smeared blood on the walls; the second time they destroyed furniture, searched through files and left a bloody piece of glass on one of the desks. The Sector reported these acts as clear intimidation and were later provided with police protection.

The **National Coordinating Body for Inhabitants of Marginalised Areas, CONAPAMG**. In particular, we accompany Roly Escobar, CONAPAMG's General Coordinator, after he received a death threat on September 10, 2006, as a result of which we activated our Support Network. Though we continue to be concerned for the families that live in precarious settlements

subject to the risk of floods and landslides, the security situation for the CONAPAMG members improved this year prompting the decision to reduce the level of physical accompaniment toward the end of October. We continue to monitor CONAPAMG's work and maintain periodic contact. In November there were rumours and an eviction attempt in the communities of Unity for Faith and Our Reality in Zone 21. PBI is monitoring the case, which is being resolved in the courts.

Background: CONAPAMG works on the issues of housing access, social infrastructure, and the legalisation of occupied land. We have accompanied CONAPAMG since July 2004 when its office was broken into and lists, invoices, floppy discs and money stolen. Many of the communities affiliated with CONAPAMG have either been evicted or are awaiting eviction. The security situation of CONAPAMG continues to be vulnerable. Miguel Zapeta González, resident of the community Esquipulas in Zone 21 of the capital and member of the organisation, was murdered in March 2005. On 18th August 2006, Carmen Sagastume, another member of the organisation, was brutally murdered in the Carmen del Monte Community. Following this, on the morning of September 10, General Coordinator Roly Escobar Ochoa was informed that armed individuals in the community Carmen del Monte were threatening to kill him, supposedly because of his denunciation of the murder of Carmen Sagastume. During the following weeks he and his family suffered threatening surveillance. Roly Escobar has also been the subject of defamations against him in the media.

Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH). Since February 2007, we have accompanied **José Roberto Morales Sic**, Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program Coordinator of CALDH. Fortunately, in recent months, José Roberto's security situation, and that of CALDH, has improved considerably. For this reason, in November we have transferred the case to follow-up status, and will maintain a more *ad hoc* accompaniment. This month we have accompanied José Roberto to a workshop on Mayan Cosmology in the Chortí area.

Background: Since 1994 CALDH has had its headquarters in the capital, where it receives reports of Human Rights violations and directs investigations into the cases. The institution provides counselling, accompaniment and training to organisations, groups and communities. One of its main areas of work is promoting justice in genocide cases, and other crimes committed during the internal armed conflict. We have accompanied CALDH on various occasions between 2004 and 2006. In February 2007, members of the legal team received direct threats. José Roberto Morales Sic was the victim of a kidnapping on 2nd February. Two armed men kidnapped him in his car and threatened to kill him. He was later released and the CALDH vehicle recovered with all his belongings present (including personal documents, cheques and a laptop which belonged to the organisation).

We accompany the **Commission of Peaceful Resistance of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta (CRP)**. We received a request from José Manuel Morales, vice-president of the organisation after the commission's founding members were harassed and attacked by police during a meeting on September 15, 2007 for expressing their doubts about the construction of a hydroelectric dam planned by the municipal mayor of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta. Since December 2007, we have accompanied CRP members in their activities. In November, following a positive analysis of their security situation, we decided to transfer the accompaniment to follow-up status, maintaining weekly contact with the Commission's members.

Background: 15 days before the general elections of 9 September 2007 the Mayor of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta declared his intention to seek the construction of a hydro-electric project during the first months of 2008, during a public audience with mayoral candidates. This hydro electric project would be based on a previous project that never reached the construction stage and before the public meeting was not known by the local inhabitants. On 15 September the Campesino Association for Integral Development of San Rafael (ADICSR) organised a meeting with the local population in order to inform them regarding the construction plans for the hydro-electric project. The same meeting also realised the formation of the CRP in order to investigate and inform regarding the proposed project. Police officials entered the meeting and removed a man without explanation, in order to question him regarding the meeting and accusing those in attendance of planning illegal actions. Since this date, the members of CRP have regularly suffered threats and intimidations of various kinds. In August, the CRP, as part of the Council of Western Villages, met with representatives of the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources as well as with the Ministry of Energy and Mining.

The **Movement of Campesino Workers (MTC)**, of the Department of San Marcos. In particular, we have accompanied **Julio Archila**, co-founder of the MTC in his consulting work with communities and during the judicial process against him. Following the dismissal of the case against Julio and his son in August 2008 and a significant reduction in security incidents suffered by the organisation, the case was passed to 'follow-up' status in November.

Background: MTC is made up of peasant community associations that work in defence of their labour rights. Since the beginning of November 2005, Julio Archila, founding member of the MTC, has suffered various forms of intimidation and threats directed against him and his family. According to the MTC, his security problems are related to consultation he offers to peasants engaged in protest on the Las Delicias estate, San Marcos. On November 4, 2005, PNC officials arrested Julio, accusing him of stealing coffee. He was brought before a judge

and freed since no proof of the accusation was found. Nevertheless, the accusation of the owners of the estate continued in force until finally, on 15th November 2007, the Las Delicias peasants came to an agreement with the estate's owners, who agreed to pay them 500,000 quetzals. The owners also agreed to drop the charges against Julio Archilla and his son. After further negotiations and setbacks, the peasants were able to buy a new estate in January 2008. The case against Julio Archilla and his son was finally suspended in August 2008 after three cancellations of the hearing by the judge at the last moment, unnecessarily prolonging the case.

2.5 OBSERVATION

PBI Guatemala provides international observation at public events where Guatemalan social organisations require international attention and interest or when it is judged necessary to be able to communicate what we witness to the international community.

After the closure in August of the Choi maquila in Villa Nueva, members of the workers' union SITRA-CHOI began a non-violent occupation of the installations, to protest against what they deem to be an illegal closure, and demand respect of their labour rights. In November, following some acts of intimidation directed at the workers, we carried out observation visits to the site, to enable us to ascertain the women's situation.

The International Day against Violence Against Women was commemorated on 25 November with a march in the capital, at which we were witnesses to the women's demands for justice. Various organizations participated, including the Women's Sector, CALDH, Women Act for Change (Actoras de Cambio) and other groups from the interior of the country. We also participated as observers in the activities of the Festival of Women in Huehuetenango.

On 28 November the year's final community consultation on mining was held in the Department of Huehuetenango. As in the case of the consultation of Cuilco, the 40 communities of the municipality of Santa Bárbara participated and gave their pronouncement on mining projects. The results were later submitted to the Congress along with the results of the Cuilco consultation. We were present during the two days of preparation and the realisation of the consultation, observing the process in different communities.

3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: OUTSIDE GUATEMALA

The Regional Representatives, the Coordination Office of the Project in Madrid and other members of the Project Committee, as well as PBI national groups, carry out public relations campaigns with numerous NGOs, national governments and agencies, parliamentarians, etc. These meetings work to develop and strengthen the "Support Network" of the project, a tool that is indispensable for the functioning of PBI's international presence in Guatemala.

PBI's General Assembly took place in November in Hamburg. During the six days of the Assembly, PBI's projects in Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Indonesia and Nepal, and the diverse national groups of PBI, shared their experiences and tabled new challenges and strategies for the next three years. Three members of the Guatemala project's committee and two people who are part of the project office participated as representatives of the Project.

4. PUBLICATIONS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In this section we publish communiqués written by human rights organisations in which they express their concerns regarding the current state of affairs in Guatemala. PBI Guatemala does not necessarily identify with the opinions and content of the articles and communiqués reproduced.



Unión Nacional De Comunidades por los Derechos Humanos Integrales

Ante el atentado perpetrado contra la familia del compañero Arturo Albizures

La Unión Nacional de Comunidades Por los Derechos Humanos integrales UNACODHI por este medio, ante el Presidente de la República y la opinión pública nacional e internacional.

Denuncia y condena el cobarde ametrallamiento de la residencia e intimidación a la familia del compañero Arturo Albizures, miembro de la ASOCIACIÓN COMUNICARTE, en la noche del jueves 30 de Octubre de 2008.

El aporte de comunicarte a lo largo de más de 15 años ha sido significativo para las organizaciones sociales y para el pueblo de Guatemala en el sentido de mantener viva la memoria histórica y el testimonio del sufrimiento y lucha de miles de personas que vivieron en carne propia la represión del estado en los años de la guerra.

Este hecho no puede verse aislado de la agresión sufrida con el allanamiento y decomiso de todo su equipo de producción el cinco de febrero del 2007 y del cual no hubo respuesta con acciones concretas de parte del estado.

Los grupos paralelos que actúan impunemente, recurren a medidas represivas bajo la misma doctrina y planteamientos de la época de la contrainsurgencia, hecho que desnaturaliza y vulnera la paz firme y duradera firmada en 1996. En esta oportunidad, los signos de represión terrorista se aplican con saña contra una familia no importando a los perpetradores, la vida de niñas y niños que merecen toda consideración y respeto.

UNACODHI, consciente de que es responsabilidad del estado y gobierno, proteger la vida e integridad física de las y los guatemaltecos y, que es su deber garantizarle a la población el pleno respeto y garantías para la vigencia de sus derechos. **Al solidarizarse CON LA ASOCIACIÓN COMUNICARTE y de manera particular con ARTURO ALVIZURES Y SU FAMILIA, exige al presidente Álvaro Colom y a las autoridades respectivas; controlar la hola de violencia que afecta a toda las personas en Guatemala y, en este caso específico, que se proteja la integridad física de todos los miembros de la familia Albizures Marroquín, se investigue el origen y trasfondo del atentado sufrido, se capture y procese conforme a la ley a los responsables.**

Llamamos a las organizaciones sociales y de derechos humanos de Guatemala a condenar ese atentado y solidarizarse con la asociación comunicarte.

¡Jamás nos damos por vencidos, luchamos siempre por la vida!

Junta Directiva Nacional.
Unión Nacional de Comunidades por los Derechos Humanos Integrales
UNACODHI
31 de octubre del 2008.



**Repudiamos la represión en la Costa Sur,
y exigimos la inmediata liberación de dos
integrantes de CODECA**



El Instituto de Estudios Agrarios y Rurales -IDEAR- y la Coordinación de ONG y Cooperativas -CONGCOOP- expresan su repudio ante los hechos de represión ocurridos el 19 de noviembre del presente, en la Costa Sur, tras una movilización organizada por el Comité de Desarrollo Campesino -CODECA-, en la que se reportaron dos mujeres y dos hombres heridos, dos capturados y varias mujeres, niños y ancianos intoxicados.

CODECA ha estado demandando atención a una serie de problemáticas que afectan a la población del área rural. Sin embargo, con el actuar de las fuerzas de seguridad, el Gobierno da muestra de falta de voluntad política para afrontar los problemas del campo.

El Gobierno tiene la obligación de atender las peticiones de la población, principalmente la que se ha visto más afectada por la pobreza y el modelo de desarrollo que no brinda oportunidades de desarrollo para la mayoría de la población.

Ante los hechos ocurridos, exigimos la inmediata liberación de los miembros de CODECA que fueron capturados, que se haga valer su derecho a la protesta pacífica, y la pronta atención de sus demandas.

Guatemala, 20 de noviembre de 2008

PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS AND CONTENT OF THE ARTICLES AND COMMUNIQUEÉS REPRODUCED.

- PBI GUATEMALA PROJECT -

Team Office in Guatemala

3^a Avenida "A", 3-51, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala
Telephone/fax: (+502) 2220 1032
E-mail: equipo@pbi-guatemala.org
Web page: www.pbi-guatemala.org

**Project Coordination Office
(New information contact)**

C/ Sevilla 19; 46006 Valencia (España)
Telephone: (+34) 963 816 835
E-mail: coordinacion@pbi-guatemala.org