



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALA PROJECT

MIP - MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE - GUATEMALA

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION
2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: WITHIN GUATEMALA
 - 2.1. DIALOGUE WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
 - 2.2. MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
 - 2.3. ACCOMPANIMENT
 - 2.4. FOLLOW-UP
 - 2.5. OBSERVATION
3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA – OUTSIDE GUATEMALA
4. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

CICIG investigation implicates 32 military personnel in Q906 million Defence Ministry embezzlement

Guatemala, 30.03.2009 (PL).- The Attorney General, together with the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG), is investigating 32 military personnel in the Ministry of Defence for the embezzlement of 906 million quetzals between 2001 and 2003. The investigations, based on an audit report carried out by the General Accounting Office, revealed that former ministers Juan De Dios Estrada Velásquez, Eduardo Arévalo Lacs, Álvaro Lionel Méndez Estrada and Robín Malconi Morán are implicated among those responsible for management of funds. The investigation has not left out former President Alfonso Portillo, who allegedly authorized various funds transfers from the Ministries of Education, Health, and Treasury to the Ministry of Defence by means of 16 governmental agreements.

CICIG identifies eleven people responsible for massacre in Huité, Zacapa

Guatemala, 01.04.2009 (EP, PL, SV, CA, AD, LH).- Two women and nine men have been identified as alleged accomplices in the murders of 15 Nicaraguans and one Dutch person on November 8, 2008, and later setting alight the bus in which the victims had been travelling, with their bodies inside. The crime took place between the villages of La Fragua and La Reforma, in the municipality of Huité (Department of Zacapa). The Special Attorney for the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) reported that the people responsible belonged to a criminal group dedicated to drug trafficking, vehicle theft and money laundering. Carlos Castresana, head of the CICIG, categorized the incident as “one of the most serious criminal acts” recorded in 2008. “This is a case that has now been resolved but that lacks something fundamental: the intellectual authors – these are the fugitives [...] Without a doubt, we need citizens’ help to find them,” he said.

Interior Ministry closes femicide and human rights units

Guatemala, 08.04.2009 (PL).- The Ministry of Interior’s decision at the beginning of April to close the Femicide and Human Rights units caused upset among human rights groups, who in response called for the removal of Minister Gándara, already identified as responsible for repressive measures on earlier occasions. Human rights activists Nery Ródenas and Norma Cruz agreed that the changes would halt the processes of dialogue and civil society proposals. Cruz expressed her concern, suggesting that “these are gaps that are being created in the continued efforts to change the behaviour of the National Civil Police in its treatment of the victim.” She also lamented the closure of the Femicide Unit, given that the Survivor’s Foundation, which she represents, works for the clarification these types of crimes. For his part, Ródenas confirmed having evidence requested by President Álvaro Colom of repressive policies that the Interior Ministry planned to implement.

LAND

Government and social organisations sign proposal for Integral Rural Development Policy

Guatemala, 02.04.2009 (CA).- Representatives of social organisations and authorities from the Executive Office signed a proposal on April 1 for the Integral Rural Development Policy, which aims to improve the quality of life of the poorest of the country and increase their development capacities.

Byron Garoz, member of the National Coordinating Committee of Peasant Organisations (CNOC), expressed satisfaction with the agreement reached after eight years of unsuccessful dialogue with former Government authorities. The leader nevertheless

emphasized the need to designate sufficient budget resources to put it in motion and to develop it throughout the country, without limiting it to the municipalities prioritised by the Government. Catalina Soberanis, coordinator of the Presidential Commission of the Permanent Dialogue System, said the proposal sought to promote integral development in populations living in poverty and extreme poverty and to guarantee access and equitable use of productive resources as well as means of production, and basic services such as education, health and housing services. According to the agreement, the policy will be coordinated and executed by the Integral Rural Development Cabinet, made up of the President of the Republic or in his place the vice-president, and the ministers and secretaries of State involved in the issue.

Peasants occupy estate in Santa Cruz Muluá

Retalhuleu, 13.04.2009 (AC).- A group of approximately 150 highland peasants occupied the Soledad Cafetal estate located on the way to La Lolita in Santa Cruz Muluá, Retalhuleu. The police chief said it was the only case of land occupation in the area that he knew of, and did not rule out poverty, extreme poverty, food insecurity or lack of employment opportunities as possible causes for it.

Social organisations demand that President Álvaro Colom pass the proposed Rural Development Law

Guatemala, 20.04.2009 (LH).- Indigenous and peasant social organisations, part of the Integral Rural Development Alliance (ADRI), asked President Álvaro Colom to present the Rural Development Law initiative to Congress of the Republic. In October 2008, ADRI member organisations and representatives of the Executive Office announced the conclusion of their roundtable dialogue with a proposal agreed between the parties. According to a commitment made by the President, this was to be submitted to the official commission on January 14, 2009 to be proposed and approved. Three months later, however, the initiative remains in the hands of the Executive.

NEGATIVE EFFECTS OF GLOBALISATION

Archbishop Ramazzini and Peoples' Council of San Marcos say mining companies should pay up to 50% in royalties

Guatemala, 02.04.2009 (PL).- Monsignor Álvaro Ramazzini, Archbishop of San Marcos, and the Peoples' Council of the department proposed that the Energy and Mining Commission (CEM) of the Congress increase the percentage of royalties from 1% to 50% that the companies pay for mining exploration and exploitation in the country.

Deputy Christian Boussinot explained that the percentages for royalties proposed by various sectors differ, pointing out that the highest is that proposed by Ramazzini, and the lowest is that proposed by the Mines and Quarries Guild (3% for precious metals). He also said that the CEM would organise three seminars to evaluate the economic, social, and environmental aspects related to mining. One specific seminar would solicit opinions and comments from indigenous social organisations. Douglas González of the Mines and Quarries Guild said that the need to establish favourable foreign investment conditions should not be overlooked, or investment would be lost. Government institutions as well as civil society organisations said that the CEM should determine and regulate the consultation process with the indigenous peoples.

Ministry of Energy and Mines begins administrative process for illegal mine in Zacapa

Guatemala, 04.04.2009 (SV).- The Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) began an administrative process against Ytong, SA for its unlicensed mining extraction activities in the municipality of Cabañas, Zacapa. The director general of Mining, Selwyn Antonio Morales Valdez, explained that the MEM had received a report from the departmental Human Rights auxiliary that indicated that the aforementioned company was extracting chromite (from which chromium is made) in the El Picadito estate, in El Arenal, Zacapa.

Indigenous youth demonstrate their rejection of mining projects and activities

Guatemala, 21.04.2009 (PL).- Young indigenous people demonstrated their opposition to mining exploitation in the country, with Andrés Silva, of the Children and Youth Committee of the National Maya Coordination and Convergence Waqib' Kej, also demanding respect for community consultations with indigenous peoples, in which the population rejected this type of activity.

A press conference was held to announce that this would be the shared position in the second Continental Gathering of Indigenous Children and Youth, to be held May 27-31 in Peru. "We want them to honour the autonomy of community referendums before the capitalist and neo liberal megaprojects such as mining exploitation and exploration," said Silva. Mines Guild manager Douglas González said he respected the rejection of the industry by the indigenous youth, adding: "It's interesting that they are travelling to Peru; they will see that that nation is one hundred percent mining activity."

Sources: Cerigua Agency (AC), Congressional Bulletin (BC), Central America Daily (CA), Guatemalan Studies Centre (CEG), La Hora (LH), Prensa Libre (PL), El Periodico (EP), Siglo Veintiuno (SV).

2. PBI-GUATEMALA ACTIVITIES – IN GUATEMALA

Team: Maria Giovanna Tejido Vazquez (Spain), Caroline Tessier (Canada), Silvia Weber (Germany), Jean-Jacques Ambresin (Switzerland), Valerie Elsig (Switzerland), Marina Comandulli (Italy/Brazil), Christopher Moye (UK), Jessica Fujan (USA).

2.1. DIALOGUE WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AND DIPLOMATIC CORPS

Meetings with national and international authorities are an important tool for PBI's efforts to make known our objectives and nature of work. Through these meetings, in cases where it is necessary and with a reserved manner, we express our concerns about critical situations that we have come to know first hand from the work we carry out in the country.

Diplomatic Corps:

- Karen Miller, head of business, British Embassy
- Teunis Kamper, Dutch Ambassador
- Rein Koelstra, head of human rights, Dutch Embassy
- Mónica Mazariegos, European Union delegation representative in Guatemala
- Francisco Sancho López, general coordinator, Technical Office of Cooperation in Guatemala of the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation
- Luís Antonio Fachini Gomes, Brazilian Ambassador

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Oscar Ernesto Mata, Governor of Zacapa
- Osmin Revolorio Corado, Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) auxiliary officer for Alta Verapaz
- Alfonso de León, general secretary, y Antonio Rodríguez López, under-secretary for conflict resolution, Secretary for Agrarian Issues, Guatemala
- Luis Chocón, National Forest Institute (INAB), Zacapa
- Héctor García Alvarado, The Nature Protection Directorate (DIPRONA), Zacapa
- Administration personnel of the PDH, Zacapa
- Víctor Hugo Godoy, School Environment and Prevention Unit of the PDH, Guatemala
- Ruth del Valle, President of the Presidential Human Rights Commission (COPREDEH), Guatemala

2.2. MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS

The team in the field meets periodically with civil society organisations to follow up on the situation of human rights defenders, to inform one another about the work being done, and to gather information that contributes to internal processes of contextual analysis.

Organisations and individuals from Guatemalan Civil Society:

- Luis Lacan, member of the Guatemalan Settlers Movement (MGP), Guatemala
- Héctor Rosada Granados, lawyer and independent analyst, Guatemala
- Fernando Solís, editor, El Observador Magazine, Guatemala
- Carmen Aída Ibarra, Myrna Mack Foundation, Guatemala

International Organisations and Agencies:

- International Non-Governmental Organisations Forum (FONGI), Guatemala
- Coordination of International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG), Guatemala
- Christina Papadopoulos, Office of the United Nations High Commission on Human Rights (OACNUDH), Guatemala
- Meeting with Dutch Platform, Oxfam-America, SOROS Foundation, Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA), Acoguate, Trocaire y Swefor.

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENT

Union of Campesino Organisations for the Verapaces, UVOC. In April we observed the monthly dialogue roundtable in Cobán, which focuses on land issues, with the participation of several Verapaz communities and state agencies. We also maintained a physical presence in Santa Cruz (Alta Verapaz), and visited a community located in the San Rafael estate, near Santa Cruz, which has succeeded in legalizing the land on which they live and whose inhabitants are now waiting for individual land titles. We continue our contact with various members of the organisation through office visits in the capital and in Santa Cruz.

*Background: A campesino organisation based in the departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz, UVOC works principally to defend and promote access to land for the peasant population and advises communities about the land legalisation process. UVOC also offers training and support to member communities in the management of development projects. We have accompanied **Carlos Morales**, leader of the UVOC, since May 2005 because he has been the victim of death threats, intimidation, and persecution by unidentified individuals. At the same time we continue to pay attention to the delicate situation of some of the communities that are part of the organisation. In February 2006 peasant families assisted by UVOC, who were living in the La Mocca estate, were evicted violently and several were wounded by gunshot. The families of La Mocca continue to live on the side of the highway.*

National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows, CONAVIGUA. In April 2009 we increased our presence in CONAVIGUA's offices in Guatemala City following at the request of the organisation, which fears it is being watched by unidentified persons. Recently, members of Mojo Mayas, an organisation that is part of CONAVIGUA, were victims of threats and aggressions (two people have been assassinated). We maintain contact with the leader of Mojo Mayas, to keep informed and to organise accompaniment work with them.

Background: CONAVIGUA carries out processes of exhumations and inhumations in different departments throughout Guatemala, above all in Quiche, Chimaltenango, and the Verapaces, as part of its work towards the recuperation of the collective memory of Guatemala's recent troubled history. These processes provoke very tense situations in small rural communities where both victims and perpetrators live, occasionally culminating in threats that seek to stop the work of the CONAVIGUA women. We have periodically accompanied the association since August 2003, with visits to their office and accompaniment during exhumation and inhumation activities in clandestine cemeteries in rural areas.

Organisation to Support an Integrated Sexuality to Confront AIDS, OASIS. This April we met regularly with executive director Jorge López, who again has requested that the Public Prosecutor receive advance testimony from Zulma Robles. This procedure had already been requested some time ago, with the aim of preserving the statement from a key witness in the judicial process started a number of years ago to investigate and obtain justice for the assassination of Paulina, an OASIS worker. We also continued paying close attention to Jorge López's security situation and the scheduling of his next hearing in the judicial process opened against him at the beginning of the year.

*Background: OASIS is an organisation that works with HIV/AIDS education and prevention, as well as promoting and protecting the rights of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people. On 17 December 2005, a transgender worker, Paulina, was killed, the seventh murder of a transgender worker that year. **Zulma Robles**, who witnessed the crime, was seriously injured during the incident. OASIS reported the case to the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and Zulma, as a witness to the murder, identified alleged agents of the National Civil Police (PNC) as the perpetrators of the crime.*

*Members of the organisation continued to suffer harassment and threats. Executive Director **Jorge López** reported being pursued by a police car during the night of 22 January 2006. On 3 February 2006 the Inter-American Commission of Human Rights (CIDH) granted protection measures for Zulma Robles, Jorge López, and another eleven members of OASIS, requesting that the Government of Guatemala adopt the necessary measures to guarantee their lives and physical integrity.*

We have been accompanying OASIS since the beginning of 2006. In January 2009, we intensified the accompaniment of Jorge López after he was accused of the attempted murder of sex worker Laila (Axel Leonel Donis González) and a legal process opened against him. The Ninth Court of the First Criminal Instance found that there were no elements linking Jorge López to the charge of attempted murder; but decided to keep him within the process for the possible offence of 'Accessory to the Crime'¹, subjecting him to a substitutive measure of house arrest without surveillance for 6 months, and required to register with a judge every 30 days. Jorge López interprets this process as a new manifestation of the constant persecution and intimidation he has suffered in recent years, which aims to impede the progress of the organisation's work and the respect for the human rights of sexual minority communities.

Fearing for his physical safety, we activated the Guatemala Project's Support Network and stepped up dialogue with Guatemalan authorities, international agencies and embassies present in the country. Between August 2008 and March 2009, with PBI's Mexico and Colombia projects and in coordination with PBI groups in Europe and North America, we organised speaking tours in Europe, Canada, and the United States, for human rights defenders accompanied by our Latin-American projects. Jorge López and Zulma Robles had the opportunity to present to various audiences the situation faced by OASIS and by sexually diverse communities in Guatemala. In February 2009, protective measures granted to OASIS in 2006 by the Inter-American Human Rights Commission (CIDH) went into effect providing Jorge López with 24-hour accompaniment by an agent of the National Civil Police (PNC). The next hearing has yet to be called.

¹ According to the Criminal Code, Article 474 (Accessory to the Crime): "One is responsible for accessory who without agreement, collusion, or prior arrangements with the perpetrators or accomplices to the crime but with knowledge of the crime, intervenes with anticipation doing any of the following: 1. Hide a fugitive or facilitate his flight. 2. Deny the authority, without justification, access to a suspect, fugitive or criminal that is found in his residence or dwelling of the sought-after person."

Association for the Protection of Montaña de las Granadillas, APMG. We continued to accompany the Association in Zacapa and surrounding area during April. We also carried out several meetings with local and departmental authorities, and visited the family of Doña Rosa, member of the Association who collects and cultivates seedlings for reforestation in the Granadillas, in Los Achiotés.

*Background: The association was created six years ago in Zacapa, when a group of residents realised that the ecosystem of the Las Granadillas mountain (Zacapa) was in danger due to logging, monoculture, and large-scale cattle farming. They were concerned above all that the water reserves would disappear, given that all of the region's water comes from the mountain's forests. The organisation sought the support of the Lutheran Church, specifically from Reverend **José Pilar Álvarez Cabrera**, and the Madre Selva Collective. These organisations 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 to 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. Threats against members of the association began when the association tried to denounce the illegal timber trade. We have accompanied the APMG since August 2008. At the beginning of 2009, Reverend José Pilar Álvarez and two members of the APMG faced legal accusations connected to their work of protecting the mountain; The charges were dismissed in the first hearing before a judge.*

Association of Friends of Lake Izabal, ASALI. ASALI is currently in a transition phase, following the election of a new board of directors, and we have not carried out specific physical accompaniment of the association this month.

Background: ASALI, an association in El Estor, in the Department of Izabal, works to protect Lake Izabal as a source of life and of work for the communities in the area. Their concerns are centred on the negative effects of mining in the region and the use of extensive agriculture, such as fruit cultivation and the production of biofuels (sugarcane and African palm).

*We began to accompany **Eloyda Mejía**, president of the association, on 21 February 2004, after she received threats related to her work, which were reported to the Public Prosecutor (MP) and to the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH). At the end of 2006, Eloyda Mejía was involved in a legal suit, accused of usurpation of lands, which was seen by her and by ASALI as an act of persecution and intimidation aimed at provoking them to abandon work against the Guatemalan Nickel Company (CGN) in El Estor. In January and February of 2007, we accompanied Eloyda and ASALI after the security situation deteriorated in El Estor as a result of tensions between the CGN, peasant groups occupying lands next to the company's installation, and the state institutions planning to carry out evictions. In October 2007, Eloyda received a threatening letter in which she and other members of the social movement were mentioned as "personas non gratas" in El Estor and "enemies of the public and the State". The letter mentioned that the law of "eye for an eye, tooth for tooth" would be applied.*

2.4 FOLLOW-UP

We regularly receive requests for accompaniment from social organisations and human rights defenders who are or who feel threatened. Through international accompaniment, we seek to reduce the threats and open a more secure space in which they can carry out their work. Once the level of risk, the threats and security incidents suffered by the accompanied organisations and individuals have diminished, we continue the accompaniment in the "follow up" phase. This means that we reduce the physical accompaniment and continue to maintain contact with them through visits and/or phone calls to their workplaces and offices. At the same time, we remain available to respond should they have specific requests for international presence.

We are following up on the situations of the following social organisations:

The Association of Mayan Lawyers and Notaries of Guatemala, AANMG.

The Association of Mayan Lawyers and Notaries supports and advises indigenous leaders and mayors who are in a vulnerable situation due to their work in defence of human rights and indigenous rights, above all relating to the defence of natural resources.

As members and representatives of the association, Amilcar Pop, Carmela Curup and Mario Saper began to suffer threats and intimidation after giving legal advice to the communities of San Juan Sacatepéquez municipality regarding a social consultation about the cement factory project of the company Cementos Progreso in the area. The threats culminated on 2 August, with the attempted attack on the life of Amilcar Pop. Since August 2008, we have accompanied members of the organisation to San Juan Sacatepéquez and in several judicial hearings. We have also kept in regular contact through visits to the office and phone calls. During recent months the threats have diminished and, as of April 2009, we have entered the follow up phase of accompanying the security situation of AANMG. The Association continues to develop its work of advising the communities.

Lesbiradas.

The Lesbiradas Collective works to defend and promote the rights of Guatemalan lesbian women, promoting, among other things, women's right of self-determination of their bodies and sexuality. Lesbiradas oppose discrimination, the exclusive patriarchal system and the systematic violence that lesbian women face.

The two accompanied members participate in various social movements, and on three occasions during July 2008 one of them was threatened with death directly by officers of the army and of the National Civil Police (PNC), having a gun pointed at her on 21 July 2008. The events were denounced at the offices of the Public Prosecutor (MP) and the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH), as well as before the Human Rights Defenders' Protection Unit (UDEFEQUA). We began to accompany the organisation in the same month. Seeing a reduction in the risk to the security of the accompanied members, as of April 2009 we continue the accompaniment in the follow up phase

Centre for Human Rights Legal Action, CALDH.

CALDH has had its headquarters in the capital since 1994. It receives reports of Human Rights violations, directing investigations into the cases and pushing for access to justice. One of its main areas of work is in seeking justice in genocide cases, and other crimes committed during the internal armed conflict.

We have accompanied CALDH workers on various occasions between 2004 and 2006. In February 2007, members of the legal team received direct threats. That same month, Jose Roberto Morales Sic, Coordinator of CALDH's Rights for Indigenous Peoples Programme, was the victim of a kidnapping by two armed men who threatened to kill him. At that point we began to accompany him on a regular basis. In February 2009, we began to observe some of the organisation's other activities. This came following an increase in threats and security risks because of its active role in the truth process, the recuperation of historical memory and the release of classified military archives relating to its actions during the internal armed conflict. In April 2009, we attended a press conference in the offices of CALDH, where several social organisations expressed their concern about the assassination of the journalist Rolando Santiz and the situation of insecurity in the country.

The Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities, AGAAI.

AGAAI's mission is to facilitate policies and strategies to strengthen indigenous municipal governments and authorities politically, technically, legally and in their administration, aiming to contribute to the construction of a State that reflects the pluricultural, multi-linguistic and multiethnic nature of the country. In this context, AGAAI works through local indigenous mayors and authorities to raise public awareness of issues such as community consultations on mining activities. It also advocates strongly about the municipal legislative agenda so that indigenous authorities can become part of the official system.

Carlos Guárquez, the executive coordinator of the association, has suffered from various forms of threats, accusations, and intimidation because of his work rejecting the Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) and mining exploitation. On 20th March 2007, AGAAI's office was broken into and raided by unidentified intruders. As a result of this first threat, PBI activated its Support Network (SN) inside Guatemala, and we continued to accompany the organisation in the following years. Currently, although physical accompaniment of Carlos Guárquez has stopped, we continue to follow the situation closely, due to the organization's relevant role in key current processes in Guatemala's, especially those relating to community consultations in various departments of the country.

The National Coordinator for Inhabitants of Marginalised Areas, CONAPAMG.

CONAPAMG works on issues of housing access, social infrastructure, and the legalisation of occupied land.

We have accompanied the organisation since July 2004 when its office suffered a break-in. Two members of the organisation were assassinated in 2005 and 2006. In particular we accompany the general coordinator **Roly Escobar**, for whom we activated our Support Network (SN) following death threats he received on 10 September 2006. Although a range of problems persist in the settlements, his security situation has improved in recent months, leading us to reduce the level of physical accompaniment at the end of October 2008.

The Commission of Peaceful Resistance of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta, CRP.

The CRP, founded in 2006 in the Municipality of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta (San Marcos), focuses on the investigation and reporting about a particular hydroelectric project, whose proposed construction in early 2008 was announced by the mayor in September 2007. The project was based on another earlier one that had not been realised, and about which the municipality's population had not been informed.

We began accompanying members of the CRP in December 2007, after some of them were attacked and interrogated by police officers during a meeting held by the organisation and following the incident several members later received threats. As a result of a positive evaluation of their security, the accompaniment has been in the follow up phase since November 2008. We continue this accompaniment as part of our objective to accompany the social processes of defence and promotion of human rights relating to the use and exploitation of natural resources, in particular water and mineral resources.

The Movement of Campesino Workers, MTC.

The MTC is made up of peasant community associations that work in defence of their labour rights. Since reporting various forms of threats and intimidation against him towards the end of 2005, we have accompanied MTC coordinator, **Julio Archila** in his work of advising communities, and throughout a legal process that was mounted against him. Since the case was dismissed

in August 2008, and the security incidents suffered by the organisation also diminished significantly, we continued our accompaniment in the follow up phase. In 2009 we maintained contact with the MTC, especially with Julio Archila, who now participates in the technical commission, set up to address the land issue, with representation from the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, the Secretary for Agrarian Issues, and the Land Fund (FONTIERRA). This follow up falls under our objective to accompany processes around the struggle for access to land.

The Women's Sector.

The Women's Sector is a coordinating body of associations that work for women's economic development and campaigns for the end of violence against women, denouncing impunity and *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. We began to accompany the organisation in June 2006. Several months later, their security situation improved noticeably, making it possible to move to the follow up phase.

Nevertheless, during April 2009 we have increased our presence in the Women's Sector offices in Guatemala City at the request of the organisation. On Wednesday 25 March, a member of the Democratic Union Party and part of the National Council for the Fulfilment of the Peace Accords (CNAP), Gustavo Adolfo Soria Morales, was assassinated in Zone 7 of the capital. The same day the wife of the Human Rights Ombudsman, Gladys Monterroso, also a member of CNAP, was kidnapped. PBI's accompaniment aims to reinforce the security measures of Sandra Morán, Women's Sector member and sub-coordinator of CNAP.

2.5 OBSERVATION

PBI in Guatemala provides international observation of those public events in which Guatemalan social organizations require it in order to demonstrate international attention and interest and to communicate outside the country what we observe.



On April 28, 2009 we observed a community referendum on mining in **San Rafael of Independence, Huehuetenango**. The communities of the municipality demonstrated their rejection to mining activities in San Rafael. The results, for now unofficial, show the following: 2,313 men and 2,715 women opposed the mine. There were no votes in favour.

3. PBI-GUATEMALA ACTIVITIES – OUTSIDE GUATEMALA

Regional Representatives, the project's Coordination Office, other committee members and the project office, as well as PBI national groups, carried out public relations campaigns with numerous NGO's, agencies, national governments, parliamentarians, etc. These meetings translate into development and strengthening of a "Support Network" for the project, an essential tool for the functioning of PBI's international presence in Guatemala.

In April, the project committee held its biannual meeting in Guatemala City, meeting with the team and office to review and improve tools and strategies of work and to update work plans for the coming months. During their time in the country, various members of the committee and project office met with representatives in Guatemala from the European Union Delegation, the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID), and with Mrs. Carmen Díaz Orejas, Spanish Ambassador to Guatemala.

The European representative to the project attended meetings on April 22 and 23 in Brussels, Belgium with the Guatemala working group and the General Assembly of the Copenhagen Initiative Network for Central America and Mexico (CIFCA).

Another project committee member participated in a conference organised by PBI-United Kingdom aimed at contributing to the improvement in protection for human rights defenders. In the context of this event, she met with Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, Special Representative of the United Nations General Secretary for the situation of human rights defenders.

4. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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



CONFEDERACIÓN CENTRAL GENERAL DE TRABAJADORES DE GUATEMALA -CGTG-

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En Guatemala, continua la violencia

El día de ayer 01 de abril, fue asesinado el reportero de TELECENTRO 13, Rolando Santis, y su camarógrafo Juan Antonio de León, se encuentra gravemente herido, ellos viajaban en su vehículo cuando fueron atacados por hombres desconocidos que se desplazaban en dos motocicletas, con casco y chalecos antibalas, al estilo colombiano (sicarios), según dieron a conocer algunos medios de comunicación de Guatemala.

Santis, quien trabajó anteriormente para Notisiete y tiene un record periodístico de aproximadamente 20 años, quedó sin vida dentro del vehículo y de León, quien recibió dos impactos de bala uno de ellos en el cuello, fue trasladado a la emergencia de un centro asistencial y su estado es muy delicado, además resultaron heridas dos personas no identificadas, al ser arrolladas por el vehículo en el que viajaban Santis y De León

El día de hoy a las 5:30 de la mañana, fue asesinado el piloto Edgar Muñoz de 46 años, quien conducía un bus de la ruta setenta y dos, siendo uno de los tantos asesinatos a pilotos ocurridos en los últimos días.

La Confederación Central General de Trabajadores de Guatemala, CGTG repudia y condena los hechos de violencia ocurridos en nuestro país y exige a las autoridades de Guatemala, que se aclaren estos asesinatos y que se capture y castigue con todo el peso de la ley a todos los causantes de tanta violencia.

Nuestra solidaridad para la familia de los asesinados, especialmente al gremio de pilotos y gremio de periodistas. A los periodistas los instamos a no callar y continuar adelante con esta ardua labor de informar con la verdad y buscar la justicia social

Exigimos una vez mas a las autoridades guatemaltecas la pronta investigación de estos hechos delictivos y a las organizaciones nacionales e internacionales, les solicitamos que se manifiesten en contra de la violencia que enluta al pueblo de Guatemala.

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ORGANIZACIONES INDÍGENAS Y CAMPESINAS SEÑALAN AVANCE EN POLÍTICA NACIONAL DE DESARROLLO RURAL INTEGRAL

La Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas CNOC miembro de La Vía Campesina, y organizaciones integrantes de la Alianza para el Desarrollo Rural Integral ADRI, en conferencia de prensa dieron a conocer que este miércoles 01 de abril sector gobierno y representantes de organizaciones indígenas campesinas ambientales entre otras se llegó a un consenso y aprobó y firmó el acuerdo político de la Política Nacional de Desarrollo Rural Integral.

Carlos Morales Coordinador General de la CNOC indicó que la política nacional tiene como objeto establecer los principios rectores normas y criterios que con la política ya se tiene un avance y desde las organizaciones se continuará con la solicitud al gobierno para que cumpla y así estipular presupuestos para impulsar los programas de Desarrollo Rural para las comunidades indígenas y campesinas.

El representante de la CNOC indico que en la discusión y aprobación de la política participaron representantes de la Secretaria de Asuntos Agrarios Ministerio de Agricultura, Ministerio de Finanzas, lo que catalogó como un logro después de años de lucha al señalar que el tema agrario ha tenido un proceso de discusión al referir que la política es parte de dicho proyecto agrario.

Morales indicó que darán seguimiento desde los diferentes espacios y que a través de acuerdo gubernativo que permita su ejecución y se constituya en el marco global para reorientar las diversas acciones a la política en programas destinados al área rural.

Por su parte Pedro Ariel García Plataforma Agraria refirió como positivo la aprobación de la Política, aunque recalcó que se espera que autoridades tomen en cuenta desde ya una asignación presupuestaria para el año 2010.

Asimismo indicó que como ADRI es fundamental echar a andar la política porque es un esfuerzo de las diferentes organizaciones, agregando que en lo teórico se ve buena voluntad de autoridades de gobierno pero esperan resultados prácticos, además exigen a los Diputados y Diputadas del Congreso de la República para que respondan con hechos a la población guatemalteca.

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ALIANZA DE COMUNIDADES INDIGENA Y CAMPESINA DE GUATEMALA

“Nadie nos manipula, solo seguimos las huellas de nuestros ancestros, que nos guían hacia la libertad total”

alianzacampesinanorte@hotmail.com

“Siempre nos hicieron sus esclavos, porque nos tienen miedo y nos tienen con migajas de educación para mantenernos lejos del desarrollo Integral” Manuel Coj Tzalam

AL HONORABLE PUEBLO DE GUATEMALA
A LOS HERMANOS MAYAS, XINCAS Y GARIFUNAS
A LOS HERMANOS LADINOS POBRES
AL PUEBLO EN GENERAL

DENUNCIAMOS:

28 familias de la comunidad WIB TZUL, ubicado a cuatro kilómetros del centro del Municipio de Cobán, Departamento de Alta Verapaz, están siendo desalojadas de una finca propiedad del Ministerio de Agricultura, Ganadería y alimentación, unos 200 policías y 75 miembros del represor ejército, apuntan sus armas en contra de humildes e indefensas familias de campesinos.

Las familias no son invasoras, nacieron en esas tierras y por año las han cuidado, lo único que tiene el MAGA en ese lugar son construcciones viejas y abandonadas, pero tampoco las familias viven dentro de las construcciones.

Desde horas de la tarde del día de ayer miércoles 01 de abril, empezamos a realizar las gestiones necesarias para la suspensión de los desalojos, pero se vio claramente que de parte de los funcionarios de gobierno no hubo voluntad para llevar el caso a un dialogo, simplemente se han burlado de las familias afectadas y ponen en riesgo la salud de niños y mujeres que son tratados como animales en estos precisos momentos.

Llamamos a las organizaciones sociales, grupos de base y las familias enteras que luchan por sus derechos, estar permanentemente en alerta ante la política de represión y hambre del gobierno socialdemócrata.

Mientras dirigentes sociales se reúnen para el dialogo nacional sobre los conflictos sociales, con el Gobierno, al mismo tiempo se desaloja a campesinos pobres de sus tierras y lo lamentable que el mismo estado persigue a los campesinos.

¿Por qué el gobierno utiliza una enorme cantidad de policías y soldados para perseguir a indefensos campesinos, mientras tanto en las ciudades importantes campea la inseguridad, donde está la política social del gobierno?

Basta de engaños a los campesinos, basta de persecución.

Cobán, Alta Verapaz, Abril 02 de 2009.

A MAS DE 500 AÑOS DE MARGINACION Y DISCRIMINACION, LA LEY DE
DESARROLLO RURAL ES NUESTRA HERRAMIENTA DE DESARROLLO
INTEGRAL

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