



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALAN PROJECT

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

Guatemalan Judge accepts visit of Spanish rogatory commission

Guatemala, 17.04.2007 (TD).- The Guatemalan judge handling the case brought by the Spanish courts against seven former leaders accused of genocide has accepted the proposed visit of a Spanish rogatory commission this May. The lawyer Benito Morales, who in 1992 represented Nobel Peace Prize laureate Rigoberta Menchú before the Spanish National Audience, said that it only remained for the Spanish authorities to be notified of the resolution through diplomatic channels.

Myrna Mack Foundation and Human Rights Attorney express doubts about purge of PNC agents

Guatemala, 25.04.2007 (LH).- Following the announcement by Julio Hernández Chávez, Director of the National Civil Police (PNC), that 561 police agents are to be officially discharged, civil society organizations have expressed their fear that without any concrete reintegration programs, many of those discharged could turn to a life of crime. "We believe that there exists a risk that agents who have been expelled will join the ranks of organized crime", stated Carmen Aída Ibarra, analyst of the Myrna Mack Foundation. She added that the Executive Body must take measures to prevent this outcome.

In response, the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH), Sergio Morales, said that a section indicating the necessity of reintegration projects that offered agents alternatives for earning a living outside the institution had been included in the proposal for the purge and reform of the PNC, developed by the PDH, the University of San Carlos and the Catholic Church.

UN urges politicians to prioritize security in government agendas and projects

Guatemala, 11.04.2007 (PL).- The United Nations (UN) summoned representatives of organizations participating in the coming elections to a meeting in which it expressed its concern regarding the high levels of violence in Guatemala. It urged that security, justice and attention to human rights be included in these organization's agendas and projects. During the meeting, UN representatives presented a report which revealed that 5,886 murders were committed in 2006, an average of 16 violent deaths per day. The UN study indicated that this situation in Guatemala had been sufficiently diagnosed and that now was the time to do something about the problem. Among the projects and reforms outstanding were laws relating to firearms, private security firms, habeas corpus, and Penal Code reforms.

European Parliament lobby for approval of CICIG

Guatemala, 11.04.2007 (PL).- A delegation of the European Parliament has travelled to Guatemala to lobby the Congress of the Republic for the speedy approval of the treaty signed between the Executive and the United Nations to create the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG). The European legislators said the agreement should come into effect as soon as possible, as they were concerned about the violence in Guatemala and that little was being done to combat it.

LAND

1,600 agrarian conflicts in Guatemala

Guatemala, 23.04.2007 (PL).- There are more than 1,660 agrarian conflicts in Guatemala, and the Verapaz region is among those areas with the most problems, reported Columba Sagastume of the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA). According to

recent figures, there are 421 cases in this region waiting for resolution. SAA statistics indicate that other departments with high numbers of conflicts include Petén, with 270 cases, and Quiché, with 228 cases. The rest of the conflicts are distributed around the country, with the highest incidence in the south west. Sagastume said the growth in cases was due to the increase in the number of centres where people could register complaints in various parts of the country. The SAA has equipped 14 such offices in the last two years. The area of Polochic, the Northern Border Strip, Chisec and Salamá are some of the sectors that are now being served. However, Daniel Pascual, director of the Committee of Campesino Unity (CUC), said that the growth in demands was due to the minimal capacity of the government to resolve them, adding that solutions were given slowly and that the government sought to attend to each case but did not seek to resolve the source of the problems. Claudia Villagrán, undersecretary of the SAA, said 68 percent of the claims were due to historical land rights, with continuing lawsuits and problems between two or more parties. Ingrid Urizar, of the non-governmental organisation Plataforma Agraria, pointed out that significant cases had lasted between 10 and 14 years without resolution. The way to end agrarian conflict was to attack the deep structural causes that generated it, affirmed Irizar.

GLOBALISATION

Construction of hydroelectric dams rejected in Quiché

Guatemala, 27.04. 2007 (Infopress).- On the 20th April the inhabitants of 135 communities, from a total of 178 villages and hamlets of Playa Grande Ixcán in Quiché, successfully carried out a 'Community Consultation in Good Faith' regarding the proposed construction of petroleum extraction and hydroelectric dam projects in their region by national and international corporations. In February 2007 the Community Councils of Development (COCODES) of the seven micro regions of Ixcán had asked the Municipal Council of Community Consultation to provide logistical support for the consultation process. A variety of organisations and around 280 observers contributed to and attended the referendum, in which 19,911 people voted. The results demonstrated an emphatic rejection of the power projects promoted by the corporations and the government, with more than 18,000 votes against (93.84%). Some 5.46% of the votes were in favour, with 0.7% void votes.

OTHER NEWS

Re-election of Sergio Morales as Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)

Guatemala, 11.04.2007 (EP, SV, PL, ND, TD, GV, UV, RU).- On 11th April 2007 Sergio Morales was re-elected as the Human Rights Ombudsman for Guatemala for a second term of five years from the 20th August 2007.

CIIDH criticises the Government's decision regarding the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education

Guatemala, 11.04.2007 (LH).- The decision of the Executive Organism of Guatemala to postpone the visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Education, is seen as an attempt to conceal the current educational situation in the country, according to the public sector. Francisco Cabrera, Director of Education for All of the International Centre for Human Rights Investigation (CIIDH), stated that the determination to cancel the visit of Muñoz within two weeks of his arrival demonstrates the government's endeavours to hide the reality of the educational system.

Indefinite Nationwide Teachers Strike

Guatemala, 24.04.2007 (SV, PL, EP).- Some 90,000 teachers of the National Teachers' Assembly (ANM) agreed to begin an indefinite strike on the 23rd April 2007 in protest against the state's failure to comply with negotiated agreements and in a rejection of the government's mandated salary increase. According to the teachers' leadership, on the first day of permanent assemblies after the signing of the collective pact, 95% of the classes in the country were affected. Nevertheless, in the capital the call to strike did not have a significant effect, and the primary and (basic) classes went ahead as normal. On the 24th of April, the teachers' leadership carried out a series of municipal meetings with the parents of affected families in order to announce the measures to be taken in the following days.

Sources: Prensa Libre (PL), Siglo Veintiuno (SV), El Periódico (EP), La Hora (LH), Infopress Centroamericana (IC), La Semana en Guatemala (SG), Informe Semanal Sobre Derechos Humanos (ISDH), Informador Rural (IR), Agencia Cerigua (AC), Incidencia Democrática (ID), Guatesemana (GS), Informe Semanal de la Comisión de Derechos Humanos de Guatemala (CDHG)..

2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: IN GUATEMALA

Team: Mary Scott (United Kingdom), Maripaz Gallardo (Spain), Owen Campbell (Canada), Enrique Riestra Rozas (Spain), Virginie Barber (France), Jacques van Luytelaar (Netherlands), Vanessa Marcos (Portugal), Nadia Graber (Switzerland), Emma Marshall (United Kingdom) and Daniel Carey (United Kingdom)

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 express confidentially our concerns about critical situations of which we have first hand knowledge through our work in the field. During the month of March meetings were held with the following authorities:

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Julio Roberto Hernández Chávez, Director, National Civil Police (PNC), Guatemala City
- Cesar Octavio Díaz Espinosa, Director, Protection and Security Division (DIPROSE), PNC, Mixco
- Felix Veliz Cesar Rosmundo, Mayor, Santa Cruz, Alta Verapaz
- Hugo Herculano Pop, Auxiliary, Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH), Cobán, Alta Verapaz
- Otto Pérez Molina, Member of Parliament, Patriot Party (PP), Guatemala City

Diplomatic Corps:

- Juan López-Dóriga Pérez, Ambassador and José Antonio Sabadell, Second in Chief, Spanish Embassy, Guatemala City
- Ian Hughs, Ambassador and Vinay Talwar, Second Secretary, British Embassy, Guatemala City
- Bea ten Tusscher, Ambassador, Dutch Embassy, Guatemala City

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.

Civil Society Organisations:

- Verónica Godoy Castillo, Public Security Monitoring and Support Initiative (IMASP), Guatemala City
- Marco Antonio Canteo and Claudia Paz y Paz Bailey, Institute of Comparative Studies in Criminal Sciences (ICCPG), Guatemala City
- Claudia Samayoa, National Human Right Movement (MNDH), Guatemala City
- Amilcar Pop, Mayan Lawyers Association, Guatemala City
- Mario Polanco, Mutual Support Group (GAM), Guatemala City
- Sandino Asturias, Guatemalan Research Centre (CEG), Guatemala City
- Helen Mack, Myrna Mack Foundation (FMM), Guatemala City
- Norma Quixtán, Office of the Secretary for Peace (SEPAZ), Guatemala City
- Antonia Buch, Mayan Defence Unit, Guatemala City
- Arturo Chub, Security and Democracy (SEDEM), Guatemala City
- Manuel Calell Morales, Association That Leads the People to the Land and Corn, Guatemala City
- Eduardo Barrios de León, Rigoberta Menchú Fondation (FRM), Guatemala City

International Organisations:

- Coordinating Body for International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG), Guatemala City.
- Commission of the Accompaniment of Human Rights Defenders, Forum of International Non-Governmental Organizations (FONGI), Guatemala City
- Representatives from PBI Colombia and PBI Mexico, Guatemala City
- Günter Nooke, The German Federal Government Commissioner for Human Rights Policy and Humanitarian Aid at the Federal Foreign Office, Guatemala City
- The European Parliament's Central America Delegation and various representatives from the Guatemalan civil society, Guatemala City
- Elisabeth Crites, Coordinator, Non Violent Peace Force, Guatemala City

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENTS

In relation to the **Centre for Human Rights Legal Action, CALDH**, we started accompanying **José Roberto Morales Sic** in February, who is Co-ordinator for CALDH's Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Programme. In April we accompanied him during various activities inside and outside of the capital, and in his daily movements.

Background: Since 1994 CALDH has had its headquarters in the capital, where they receive reports of Human Rights violations and also direct investigations into the cases. The institution provides counselling, accompaniment and training to organisations, groups and communities. One of their 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 the 2nd of February. Two armed men kidnapped him in his car and threatened to kill him. Later they abandoned him and the CALDH vehicle was also recovered with all his belongings present (including personal documents, cheques and a laptop which belonged to the organisation).

In relation to the **National Movement for Human Rights, MNDH**, since March we have been accompanying the members of the Protection Unit of Human Rights Defenders (UPDDH), visiting their office daily and accompanying them in various activities of their work.

Background: MNDH is a group that combines most of the human rights NGOs in Guatemala, and actively seeks the support of the Guatemalan government for the investigation of human rights violations both current and past and to bring those responsible to justice. It also informs international governments and NGOs. The UPDDH investigates and documents attacks and threats against human rights defenders in Guatemala. Amongst others, it has recently worked in relation to threats made against a person that had published a report criticising the activities of mining companies and in relation to the death of a unionist in Puerto Quetzal.

The offices of UPDDH, MNDH and COMUNICARTE in Guatemala City were broken into during the weekend of 4th and 5th February 2007 and human rights information was stolen. Moreover, the personnel of these organisations are aware of surveillance being carried out.

Since the 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. During April 2007 we have continued to accompany UVOC in Alta Verapaz, intensifying our accompaniment of Carlos Morales towards the end of the month. This was due to an increase in surveillance and intimidation directed towards him, and a confrontation between the two groups of campesinos from the Mocca estate which resulted in the death of a campesino from the group affiliated to UVOC.

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 to provide support in the process of legalisation of the communities' titles to land. The UVOC also offers training for communities affiliated to the UVOC and supports development projects within those communities. Carlos Morales, leader of the UVOC, has been a victim of death threats, acts of intimidation, and persecution by unknown individuals. Due to a serious 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. In January 2006, Carlos Morales was victim of surveillance on the block where he lives with his family. The offices and personnel of the UVOC continue to be under surveillance from unknown persons. The situation in some communities affiliated to the UVOC continues to be delicate: in February and April 2006, the campesino families that live in the Mocca Estate were violently evicted, leaving several people with gunshot wounds. In the month of July there was a confrontation between two groups of campesinos leaving casualties of one dead and 39 injured on the side of the evicted campesinos.

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 the 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. In the months of January and February 2006 we accompanied Eloyda and ASALI after a tense situation arose between some groups of campesinos that had occupied lands, the CGN and state actors who wished to remove them. During April 2007 we have continued to maintain an international presence and regular contact with Eloyda and ASALI.

Background: Eloyda Mejía has suffered a number of threats as a result of her work to protect Lake Izabal, in the department of Izabal, East Guatemala, and because of her work informing local residents of the possible damaging effects of the re-opening of the Guatemalan Nickel Company (subsidiary of Skye Resources Inc., Canada) mining operation in the area. On 21st February 2004, during a conference on the future of the lake in El

Estor, Izabal, the threats against her worsened, 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 "Yes to CGN" (Guatemalan Nickel Company)." Since the last months of 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 against her in order to force her to abandon her work against the mining company CGN in El Estor.

We visit the **Madre Selva Collective's** office regularly and have frequent contact with their members during their work in different departments throughout the country. PBI has been accompanying members of Madre Selva since June 2004 in some of their journeys to the regions where they carry out their work, and have continued a regular presence in their office in the capital. In April 2007 we remained in regular contact with members of the collective.

Background: Madre Selva is an environmental organisation which holds regular workshops on the negative impact of mega-projects and in particular those involving open-pit mining and the installation of hydroelectric power plants. Members of the organisation regularly receive threats because of their work, above all in areas where conflicts exist over the issues that the collective reports about. Recently, some members of the organisation have once again begun receiving serious threats. Presently the organisation is target to a series of defamation campaigns linked to the publication of an environmental study concerning the pollution found in the waters of the River Tzalá in San Marcos. The author of the study, since its publication, has received a series of threats. This situation has provoked an international reaction from various human rights organizations in support of the organisation and the author, whom eventually left the country.

We continue to accompany the **National Coordination of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA)** with regular visits to, and presence in, their office, as well as during their exhumations and inhumations of clandestine cemeteries in rural areas. In April 2007 we continued with frequent visits since they had become aware of increased surveillance and we accompanied members of CONAVIGUA to the Cruz del Milagro estate where they are initiating exhumations.

Background: CONAVIGUA continues to facilitate the process of exhumations and inhumations in various departments throughout Guatemala, mostly in Quiché, Chimaltenango, and the Verapaces, as part of their effort to recuperate the collective memory of Guatemala's recent history. This process provokes tense situations in these small rural communities between victims and their perpetrators, and the women from CONAVIGUA receive threats and intimidation to stop them from continuing this work. The organisation has continued carrying out exhumations and inhumations during this year.

We accompany the **Movement of Campesino Workers (MTC)**, an entity of the Social Pastoral Office of the Diocese of San Marcos, which consists of associations of campesino communities working to defend their labour rights. In particular, we accompany **Julio Archila**, founder of the MTC. In the month of April 2007 we accompanied Julio and his son when they signed in front of a judge, and we remain in contact with MTC's technical support team.

Background: Since the beginning of November 2005, Julio Archila, a member of the MTC, has suffered various forms of intimidation and threats directed against him and his family. Apparently his security problems are related to the support the MTC gives to the campesinos that are engaged in protest on the Las Delicias estate, San Marcos. On 4th November 2005, police arrested Julio, accusing him of stealing coffee. He was brought before the judge and, on not finding any proof of the accusations, he was freed. Since then there have been other acts of intimidation and threats made against Julio Archila and members of his family, as well as other campesino leaders involved in labour conflicts between campesinos and estate owners. Recently, an arrest warrant was issued against Julio Archila and his son Antonio for having transported coffee from the Las Delicias estate in October 2005. The arrest warrants were substituted for other measures while the investigation continues. For the moment Julio's legal position remains unresolved until the judge has decided on the proceedings.

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**, member of OASIS, a witness to the assassination of a sex worker. In the month of March we maintained weekly visits to the office and we accompanied Zulma during some movements in the city.

Background: On 17th December 2005, the transgender worker Paulina was killed, being the seventh murder of a transgender worker that year. Zulma, who was present when the crime was committed, was seriously injured during the incident. She is a witness to the murder of Paulina, accusing members of the National Civil Police (PNC) as perpetrators. 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 being subjected to

harassment and threats, and during the night of 22nd January, Jorge López, Executive Director of OASIS, reported that he had been pursued by a police car.

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 "femicide". In April we accompanied the Women's Sector with regular visits; we also met with Sandra Moran, the Leadership and Organisational Strengthening programme co-ordinator.

Background: 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 an intimidation and asked for police protection.

We accompany **Erwin Orrego**, active member of the **National Front in Defense of Public Services and National Resources (FNL)** and the **Guatemalan National Front of Market and Informal Economy Vendors (FENVEMEGUA)**, a trade union that brings together workers from the informal sector and that asserts their rights in the authorities of the Municipality of Guatemala City. We continued our accompaniment of Erwin Orrego, with follow-up visits and meetings for relating to the denouncements he has previously made, in the Public Ministry and the Human Rights Solicitor's office and in his union activities. In April 2007 we have continued to accompany him during some of his activities.

Background: On the 27th July 2006, Erwin Estuardo Orrego Borrayo, active member of FENVEMEGUA, was kidnapped by a group of armed men dressed in black identifying themselves as police. During the course of his kidnapping, he was victim of psychological and physical torture for two hours before being released. At the request of the Human Rights Defenders Protection Unit (UPDH) of the National Human Rights Movement (MNDH), we accompany Mr. Orrego and the members of the MNDH throughout the proceedings following his kidnapping. Mr. Orrego had also been kidnapped and tortured in August 2003, and since then has been the victim of threats and surveillance on repeated occasions.

The **National Coordinating Body for Inhabitants of Marginalised Areas, CONAPAMG**, works on the issues of housing access, social infrastructure, and the legalisation of occupied land. In the month of November of 2006 we brought to a close the activation of our Support Network which was activated in order to show our preoccupation with the security of **Roly Escobar**, Coordinator General, who received a death threat on the 10th September 2006. In April 2007 we continued to accompany CONAPAMG with regular visits to the office, also accompanying Roly Escobar during some of his activities.

Background: We have accompanied CONAPAMG since July 2004 when their office was broken into and robbed of lists, invoices, floppy discs and money. 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 the 18th August 2006, Carmen Sagastume, another member of the organisation, was brutally murdered. After this act, the morning of the 10th September, 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 found themselves under heavy surveillance.

In relation to **Carlos Guárquez**, General Co-ordinator of the **Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities (AGAAI)**, and adviser to the indigenous municipality of Sololá since January of 2005, we maintain contact by telephone calls and visits to his office. Since a break-in in the office of AGAAI on 20th March we have provided accompaniment through regular visits to his office. During the month of April we continued with our frequent visits to AGAAI's office and, following a meeting with Carlos Guarquez to analyse the organisation's situation, the decision was made to intensify the accompaniment.

Background: Mr. Guarquez has suffered from various forms of threats, accusations, and intimidations because of his work rejecting the Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA) and mining exploitation. On 25th March 2005, in the village of El Tablón, Sololá, the vehicle used by Carlos Humberto Guarquez, of AGAAI and FUNDAMAYA, was doused in petrol and set on fire by unknown individuals. Death threats specifically naming Carlos Guarquez, the then Indigenous Mayoress of Sololá, Dominga Vásquez, 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 of your disappearance from this world." As a result of this threat we decided to activate our Support Network within Guatemala. More recently on 20th March, the office of AGAAI was violently broken into by persons unknown who took important documentation and containers. The association denounced this grave incident as a clear act of intimidation against workers and members of AGAAI for their work in supporting and accompanying the Alcaldes and indigenous authorities that struggle for the protection of the land. They have reported the act to the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH).

2.4. OBSERVATIONS

PBI Guatemala provides international observations in public events where Guatemalan social organisations require international attention and interest. These observations also take place when it is judged necessary in order to be able to communicate what we witness outside of the country.

On the 20th April we provided a presence as international observers during the “community consultation of good faith” in the municipality of Ixcán, El Quiché. 18,071 of the 19,911 participants said “No” to the installation of a hydroelectric plant on the Chixoy River in the Xalalá district, and to the extraction of oil throughout the municipality. The community’s right to decide was accompanied by 283 observers, both national and international, who acted as witnesses of honour to the legality of the democratic process realized in the 135 communities that participated in the consultation.

3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: OUTSIDE OF GUATEMALA

The Regional Representatives, the project’s co-ordinating Office in Madrid, and other Project committee members, as well as PBI national groups, have been strengthening public relations with numerous NGOs, agencies and national governments, parliaments etc. These meetings develop and strengthen the project’s “Support Network”, an indispensable tool in PBI’s international presence in Guatemala.

Kerstin Reemtsma, the project’s European Representative, continued her involvement with the Guatemala workgroup of the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico (CIFCA), in preparation for the international conference “10 years of the Peace Accords in Guatemala: Balances and Perspectives of the International Community” which took place on the 2nd, 3rd and 4th of May 2007. This conference was put together by three separate organisations: CIFCA, CIDSE y Grupo Sur.

4. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

In this section we publish several 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.



COORDINADORA NACIONAL DE ORGANIZACIONES CAMPESINAS -CNOC-

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LA POBLACIÓN DE IXCÁN DIJO: “-NO- A LAS EXPLOTACIONES PETROLERAS Y LA CONSTRUCCIÓN DE LA REPRESA HIDROELÉCTRICA EN XALALÁ”

La Consulta Comunitaria a los habitantes del Municipio de Ixcán, Quiché, es una “VOZ VIVA DEL PUEBLO” que mediante una participación consciente y de buena fe, más de 18 mil personas dijeron “NO” a la instalación de una hidroeléctrica sobre el río Chixoy en Xalalá y un rotundo rechazó a la explotación petrolera en las grandes reservas naturales existentes en el occidente del país.

Aproximadamente doscientos observadores nacionales e internacionales vigilaron el desarrollo democrático del evento en la cabecera municipal y en las distintas aldeas para testificar una Consulta real y participativa, por ello, desde un principio la **Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas CNOC** respaldó al Concejo Municipal, a los integrantes de los Comités Comunitarios de Desarrollo de Segundo Nivel, las siete micro

regiones de Ixcán a defender los intereses de la población, ya que ninguna norma nacional e internacional coarta el derecho de los pueblos organizados a proteger los recursos naturales de la mano de empresas transnacionales que vorazmente están ansiosas de saquear la riqueza del suelo guatemalteco y luego contaminar el ambiente. Este acontecimiento tiene validez ante los ojos de las abuelas y abuelos indígenas, ya que mediante acuerdos y decisiones conjuntas se rechazaron esos negocios perjudiciales para la salud HUMANA, las plantas y los animales, como en su momento se desarrollaron consultas en Santa Eulalia, Huehuetenango; Sipakapa, San Marcos; Río Hondo, Zacapa; San Pedro Necta y la Democracia, Huehuetenango; Momostenango, Totonicapán y otros municipios del interior del país.

El presidente constitucional de los empresarios, Oscar Berger, sin previa consulta a los habitantes ha asegurado en varias ocasiones que se otorgó permiso a una empresa para la construcción de la represa en la aldea Xalalá, la que supuestamente generaría 181 megavatios de energía.. Ante esa decisión gubernamental, era urgente conocer el rechazo o aceptación del pueblo mediante una Consulta Popular.

CNOC respalda los resultados de la Consulta Comunitaria y aclama el trabajo organizativo de los representantes comunitarios, movimientos sociales y la Corporación Municipal encabezada por el alcalde Marcos Ramírez. Por aparte, lamenta el interés político de algunos partidos tradicionales que antes del evento boicotearon y tergiversaron los objetivos de una Consulta democrática. Asimismo, condenamos públicamente el trabajo negativo hecho por la Radio Ixcán y otros medios de comunicación local, al haber manipulado a la opinión pública a favor de los empresarios interesados en la explotación de las riquezas de la madre naturaleza. Ahora tuvo un revés, "RECHAZO DEL PUEBLO".

Esperamos que todas y todos los habitantes que votaron, respalden y defiendan los resultados de la Consulta, pues fue un "NO" al saqueo de los recursos naturales con fundamentos legales en el convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional del Trabajo OIT, la Constitución Política de la República y el Código Municipal.

Guatemala, abril de 2007.

ALIANZA DE COMUNIDADES INDIGENA Y CAMPESINA DEL NORTE
"Nadie nos manipula, solo seguimos las huellas de nuestros ancestros, que nos guían hacia la libertad total"

A la Comunidad Nacional e Internacional
A las Organizaciones pro Derechos Humanos
A la opinión Pública en general
Se les hace saber:

El día lunes 23 de abril, 90 familias Q'eqchi's, que viven en condiciones de extrema pobreza, de diferentes Comunidades, Aldeas y Caseríos de los Departamento de Alta Verapaz y el Peten, **preocupados por el alza del precio del Sagrado Maíz y ante la falta de tierras para cultivar el Maíz**, decidieron ocupar tierras de la **Finca Chahimal** que supuestamente es propiedad de la **Familia Beltranena** y se encuentra ubicada a la altura del **Cruce el Pato del municipio de Sayaxché, el Peten**

Hasta este momento y después de cumplirse 24 horas de ocupación han sido amenazados por los vaqueros de la parte patronal y son obligados a presentarse el día de hoy martes 24, a las oficinas del Fondo de tierras del Municipio de Sayaxché el Peten.

Las familias que ocupan la finca, lo hacen preocupados por el alza del precio del Sagrado Maíz y como protesta porque el Sagrado Maíz sea utilizado para la elaboración de biocombustibles, la cual viene a ofender directamente la cultura de la Población Maya Q'eqchi' y principalmente que las poblaciones que carecen totalmente de tierras tendrán que pagar grandes cantidades para alimentarse en el futuro y eso hará que muchas comunidades sufran de hambruna.

Por tal razón las familias de la **Nueva Comunidad Chahimal, Sayaxche, Petén**, solicitan urgentemente solidaridad y acompañamiento por la lucha por el **Derecho a la Tierra y al Sagrado Maíz**.

Nueva Comunidad Chahimal, Sayaxché Peten, Abril 24 de 2007

**¡POR EL DERECHO A LA TIERRA Y AL SAGRADO MAIZ
NUESTRA LUCHA ES POR EL DERECHO A LA VIDA!**

“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

**PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS AND CONTENT OF THE ARTICLES
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