



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALAN PROJECT

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION
2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA : WITHIN GUATEMALA
 - 2.1. MEETINGS WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AND THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS
 - 2.2. MEETINGS WITH CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS
 - 2.3. ACCOMPANIMENTS
 - 2.4. FOLLOW-UP of PREVIOUS ACCOMPANIMENTS
 - 2.5. OBSERVATIONS
3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA : OUTSIDE GUATEMALA
4. PUBLICATIONS BY NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (IN SPANISH)

1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

CICIG to investigate bus driver murders following a petition from President Colom

Guatemala, 12.02.2008 (PL, EP, SV) - The International Commission against impunity in Guatemala has agreed to investigate the recent wave of attacks against bus drivers, following a request from Álvaro Colom. During a meeting on Monday, Colom formally asked Carlos Castresana, Director of CICIG, to begin an inquiry into the case of the 14 bus drivers who were violently killed at the beginning of February in Guatemala City and the surrounding area. After 50 minutes of discussion in the presidential palace, Castresana agreed that CICIG would accept the case. This is the first time the new administration has submitted a case to the Commission for investigation.

President Colom to receive pardon petitions; Congress reinstates law of presidential reprieve for the death penalty

Guatemala, 13.02.2008 (PL, EP, SV, LH, N7) - After more than seven years of a legal void regarding the death penalty, Congress approved, by 140 of 143 votes, decree 6-2008, the Regulatory Law of Commutation for those subject to the Death Penalty, by which is restored to the President the power of reprieve for those facing capital punishment. Congress approved the bill, submitted by the Patriot Party, with the aim to 'send a message to offenders'. In 2007, the then administration of the Grand National Alliance Party (GANA) blocked the law after it received its second of three readings, due to objections that commutation decisions should not reside in the hands of the president. The only parties which rejected the law during its recent passage were the Guatemalan National Revolutionary Union (URNG) and Assembly for Guatemala parties, stating that the effectiveness of the death penalty as a deterrent has not been shown. Nineth Montenegro of Assembly for Guatemala, stated that to leave the final word to the President regarding the execution of a prisoner is to return to the times of the monarchy. She added that "it does not help to increase punishments or abandon a culture of death, without a system of justice that works well nor a National Civil Police or Public Prosecutor's Office that works effectively."

Justice sought for woman allegedly sexually assaulted by police

Guatemala, 18.02.2008 (PL) - Juana Méndez is alleged to have been sexually assaulted by two agents of the National Civil Police (PNC) whilst in custody in 2005. The trial against the accused officers will begin in Santa Cruz del Quiché on Monday 18 February, and women's organisations are demanding justice. According to a study by the Guatemalan Institute of Comparative Studies in Criminal Sciences, 75 percent of women in custody suffer some form of sexual aggression, however this is the first sexual abuse case involving the police to be brought to court.

Juana Méndez, 43, was detained in Chimaltenango in January 2005 and then transferred to the Nebaj police station in Quiché. There it is alleged that one officer stripped and assaulted her and another raped her. The two officers allegedly forced her to walk naked in front of other detainees and then made her wash herself to remove evidence of the rape. The whereabouts of one of the accused police officers, Nery Obserto Aldana, is unknown however the other, Antonio Rutillo Matías, will appear in court charged with rape and abuse of authority. Various women's organisations are asking for a fair and transparent trial that will break the impunity which surrounds abuses committed against women prisoners. Sandra Morán, representative of womens' organisations, explained that the trial could set a precedent, enabling other women to speak out. The organisations will congregate in front of the tribunal in Santa Cruz del Quiché to demand justice.

Report from the United Nations High Commission: Hina Jilani

Guatemala, 20.02.2008 (LH). – The number and intensity of attacks against human rights defenders has increased in the last 5 years. Between July 2002 and December 2007, fifty human rights defenders were murdered, a situation described as worrying by Hina Jilani, United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Human Rights Defenders. Following a brief visit to the county, Jilani presented a preliminary report on the situation of defenders of human rights in Guatemala, which recognises the situation of inequality of wealth distribution, the proliferation of violence, organized crime, pseudo-governmental parallel powers and generalised impunity as significant factors in the incidence of attacks.

During commemoration of Day of the Victims of the Civil War, President pledges to open the Military archives.

Guatemala, 26.02.2008 (SV, PL, EP).- On the National Day of the Victims of the Civil War, during a ceremony in the National Palace of Culture, President Álvaro Colom, announced the decision to declassify the military archives, thus removing legal obstacles that could shed light on the fates of the thousands of Guatemalans that disappeared during the internal armed conflict.

LAND

Campeños in Izabal take hostages and demand liberation of their detained campesino leader.

Guatemala, 22.02. 2008 y 23.02.08 (PL) – A group of the National Civil Police (PNC) was taken hostage and later released by 1,500 campesinos from 26 communities of Livingstone, Izabal, as a means of pressuring for the release of their leader Ramiro Choc, arrested on 14 February. The campesinos threatened to detain the officers until Ramiro Choc was released. The campesino leader was arrested on charges of land appropriation, aggravated robbery and illegal detention. Choc was arrested on 14 february on the Peten road at km 271 and transferred to Los Jocotes prison in Zacapa, from where he was later taken to the Preventative Centre in Zone 18 of Guatemala City. A spokesperson for the campesinos, who asked to remain anonymous, justified their actions by saying that the government has ignored their demands and ordered evictions. Furthermore, they consider Choc to be innocent of the crimes of which he is accused.

GLOBALIZATION

Guatemala and Panama conclude free trade agreement negotiations.

Guatemala, 14.02.2008 (SV).- Panama and Guatemala have concluded negotiations of the free trade agreement that will allow 98.1% of industrial exports to be traded free of duty. In 2007 the bilateral relationship reached 120 million dollars, which represented a 15% increase on the previous year.

Government Ministry to promote two mega projects, including the 'Transversal Del Norte' Northern Cross-Country Road Route

Guatemala, 18.02.2008 (SV).- The Minister of Communications, Infrastructure and Housing, Luis Alejos, announced that the construction of a bridge in the port of Champerico and the Transversal del Norte road route are two of the mega projects with which President Álvaro Colom's government hopes to boost the national economy. He added that the construction of 167 schools and 11 stretches of road, the majority in the west of the country, is planned to commence during the Government's Plan of 100 Days. The new roadways projects will be focused in the west and north of the country, in addition to the mega project "Franja Transversal del Norte" which will provide 338 kilometers of roadway. The government official indicated that first they will focus on the completion of roads under construction, principally in the rural areas, following which they will focus on 95% of the housing in these sectors.

OTHERS

National Adoption Council registers three thousand adoption applications

Guatemala, 13.02.2008 (PL) - The National Adoption Council registered more than three thousand new adoption applications in 2007. The National Ombudsman's office will assume these cases in accordance with the new rules. The deadline for registration of 2007 applications expired this Tuesday 8 February. At 11 pm, three thousand cases had been registered.

Sources: Prensa Libre (PL), Siglo Veintiuno (SV), La Hora (LH), El Periódico (EP), Guate semana (GS), Reuters (R) Tele Noticiario: Tele Diario (TD)

2. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA: IN GUATEMALA

Team: Emma Marshall (United Kingdom), Daniel Carey (United Kingdom), María José Urgel Riquelme (Spain), Marion Sornay (France), Maren Enders (Germany), Valentina Gori (Italy), Johanna Van Strien (Netherlands), Wiebke Schramm (Germany) y Jacqueline Benfield (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 confidentially express our concerns about critical situations of which we have first hand knowledge through our work in the field. During February meetings were held with the following authorities:

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Álvaro Salinez, Station Chief, National Civil Police, El Estor, Izabal
- Joel Lorenzo, Mayor of El Estor, Izabal
- Ludin Edgardo Oaxaca Ramos, Officer, National Civil Police, Jocotán, Chiquimula
- Rosa María Juárez, Head of the Human Rights Office of the National Civil Police, Guatemala City
- Herberto Caranza, Secretary to the Governor of Chiquimula, Chiquimula

Diplomatic Corps:

- Ian Hughes, British Ambassador, Guatemala City
- James Derham, U.S. Ambassador, Guatemala City
- Bettina Consten, First Secretary, German 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. During February meetings were held with the following organisations:

Civil Society Organisations:

- Claudia Samayoa, Protection Unit for Human Rights Defenders, Guatemala City.
- Arturo Chub, Association for the Study and Promotion of Security in Democracy, SEDEM, Guatemala City.
- José Manuel Suasnavar, Forensic Anthropology Foundation of Guatemala, FAFG, Guatemala City.
- Mutual Support Group, GAM, Guatemala City.
- Ruth Del Valle, Secretariat for Human Rights and Peace, Guatemala City.

International Organisations and Agencies:

- Coordinating Body for International Accompaniment in Guatemala (CAIG), Guatemala City
- Coordinating Committee on International Accompaniment in Guatemala (ACOGUATE), Guatemala City
- Human Rights Commission and Human Rights Defenders Accompaniment Commission of the Forum of International Non-Governmental Organisations (FONGI), Guatemala City
- Marty Jordan of the Guatemala Human Rights Commission USA

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENTS

We started accompanying **José Roberto Morales Sic**, Co-ordinator of the Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Programme of the **Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH)**, in February 2007. During February we accompanied him on various weekly journeys in the capital and during various visits to Momostenango and Chiquimula.

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).

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. We have continued to accompany them throughout February in their headquarters in Santa Cruz, and during the organization's activities. We remain concerned about the security of the members of the organization as they continue receiving threats and noticing surveillance.

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. 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. UVOC's offices and personnel continue to be under surveillance from unknown persons. The situation in some communities affiliated with 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 July 2006 there was a confrontation between two groups of campesinos leaving one dead and 39 injured 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 2007 we accompanied Eloyda and ASALI after a tense situation arose between groups of campesinos that had occupied lands, the CGN and state actors who wished to remove them. We have continued to accompany Eloyda Mejía in her activities this month.

Background: Eloisa 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, 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 October 2007, Eloyda Mejía received a threatening letter that mentioned her and other active members of civil society organizations 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 rule of an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth would be applied".

PBI has accompanied the **Madre Selva Collective** since June 2004 with regular visits to its office and has had frequent contact with its members during their work in different departments throughout the country. During February we remained in regular contact with Madre Selva and accompanied them during a press conference at their office, where 50 leaders of San Miguel Acatán (Huehuetenango) reported the results of the municipal's metal mining consultations which were carried out in December.

Background: Madre Selva is an environmental organisation which holds regular workshops on the negative impact of mega-projects, 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 appear in the Collective's reports. Since December 2006 the organisation has been subject to defamation campaigns linked to the publication of an environmental study concerning the mining pollution found in the waters of the River Tzalá in San Marcos. The study's Italian author received a series of threats after its publication. This situation provoked an international reaction from various human rights organizations in support of the organisation and the author, who eventually left the country.

We continue to accompany the **National Coordinator of Guatemalan Widows (CONAVIGUA)** with regular visits to, and presence in, its office as well as during exhumations and inhumations of clandestine cemeteries in rural areas. We continue with these frequent visits due to increased surveillance, which has been apparent since December 2006. During February we continued weekly visits to their office and accompanied a number of the members during an inhumation in Caserio Tierra Caliente, Sacapulas, Quiché.

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 efforts for the recuperation of the collective memory of Guatemala's recent 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.

We accompany the **Movement of Campesino Workers (MTC)**, an entity of the Social Pastoral Office of the Diocese of San Marcos. MTC is made up of associations of campesino communities working to defend their labour rights. In particular, we accompany its founder, **Julio Archila**. In February we remained in contact with Julio Archila in his activities in San Marcos and accompanied the organisation during the inauguration of the new community constructed by campesinos formerly of the finca Las Delicias.

Background: 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. His security problems appear to be related to the support the MTC offers to campesinos 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 a judge and freed, as no proof of the accusation was found. 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 continued. In June 2007, the judge of the Court of First Instance absolved Julio of all the charges due to a lack of evidence. Nevertheless, the following month the Appeals Court in Quetzaltenango authorised more time for the further investigation of the case. On 15th November 2007 the Las Delicias campesinos came to an agreement with the estate's owners, who agreed to pay them 500,000 quetzales. The owners also agreed to drop the charges against Julio Archilla and his son. There was a moment in which the negotiations had appeared to breakdown, but finally in January 2008 the campesinos were able to buy a new estate and they are now in the process of constructing their new community. At the time of writing, the promise to drop charges against Julio Archilla and his son had not yet been fulfilled.

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 and witness to the assassination of a sex worker. In February we accompanied Zulma in her journeys around the city and in other activities 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).

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. We continue to visit its office regularly.

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 clear intimidation and asked for police protection.

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 November 2006 we brought to a close the activation of our Support Network, activated because of our concern about the security of **Roly Escobar**, CONAPAMG's Coordinator General, after he received a death threat on 10th September 2006. During February we continued to accompany Roly Escobar, with regular visits to the organization's office.

Background: 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. Following this, on the morning of 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.

We received a request for accompaniment from **Project Counselling Services (PCS)** on behalf of a Guatemalan worker of the organisation who suffered a kidnapping, sexual aggression and the theft of a vehicle on 7th May 2007. On 17th May 2007 the same person received a phone call to their house threatening all the members of the organisation. These facts were reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office and the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH). Since 16th May 2007 we have intensively accompanied the person who suffered this grave incident. During February we continued accompanying the PCS worker in journeys around the city. We also accompanied other members of PCS to Santa Cruz, Quiché where a protest took place outside the court hearing where two officers of the national civil police (PNC) of Nebaj are accused of sexually assaulting Juana Méndez during custody.

Background: Project Counselling Services (PCS) is an international organisation supported by a partnership of agencies in Europe and Canada. Its mission is to strengthen the capacities of refugees and populations affected by displacements and other forms of exclusion to participate in autonomous, democratic and inter-cultural processes, including from a gender perspective, within the framework of the promotion, defence and exercise of human rights. In Guatemala, PCS has been involved with the struggle against impunity relating to human rights violations committed during the armed conflict and in post-conflict Guatemala, with special emphasis on sexual violence. On Monday, 7th May 2007 a worker was the victim of a temporary kidnapping during which they suffered verbal, physical and sexual aggression. The PCS vehicle in which they were travelling and which was carrying 'International Mission' signage was stolen. On 17th May 2007 the same worker received a telephone threat in their home in which a male voice stated: "(Expletive), that wasn't enough... We told you not to do anything. You didn't get it. We are going to break your ass and those of the lesbians and whores in your office. We know who you are and what you do. Don't mess around, leave things as they are."

We accompany the **Commission of Peaceful Resistance of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta (CRP)**. We received a petition for accompaniment from Jose Manuel Morales, Vice President of the organisation, after a meeting of 15 September during which a founder member of the Commission was detained and questioned by police who accused the organisation of carrying out illegal actions. The organisation later denounced the events to the Human Rights Programme of the Diocese of San Marcos (PDDHS) and the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH). Those in attendance at the meeting of 15 September expressed their concerns regarding the construction of a hydro-electric project planned by the Mayor of the municipality of San Rafael de la Cuesta, San Marcos. Since then, members have suffered various threats and intimidations, which led the Commission to request accompaniment from PBI for their meetings. Since December 2007 we have accompanied members of the CRP in their activities. During February we remained in contact with José Manuel Morales and other members of the Commission of Peaceful Resistance of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta.

Background: 15 days before the general elections of 9 September 2007 the Mayor of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta (and current Mayor elect) 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.

2.4 FOLLOW UP OF PRIOR ACCOMPANIMENTS

The **Guatemalan Association of Indigenous Mayors and Authorities (AGAAI)**. Following a break-in in the office of AGAAI on 20th March 2007 we provided accompaniment in the city and during the association's activities outside of the capital. We currently we remain in regular contact with the Association by regular phone calls and visits to the office.

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 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 2007, the office of AGAAI was broken into by persons unknown who took important documentation and containers. 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. They reported the act to the office of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH).

2.5 OBSERVATIONS

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.

During February we observed a march to the Constitutional Court by students of the University of San Carlos, regarding proposed changes to the constitution of the university. We also observed a march for the National Day of Dignity of the Victims of the Civil War from Morazán Park to the Constitutional Court via the National Palace, where various acts of commemoration and of demand for justice took place.

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.

Estefanía Sarmiento, committee member and training team member, and Fermín Rodrigo, training team member, represented the Project in the annual meeting of the International Council of Peace Brigades International that took place between 17 and 22 February in Mas Franch, Girona, Catalonia. During these meetings decisions are taken concerning the entire organization: budgets are approved, strategic plans revised and work at an international level is planned and prioritized for the year.

Kerstin Reemtsma, European Representative of the Project has temporarily taken over the role as Guatemalan Project Coordinator while Montse Garcia is away on maternity leave.

4. PUBLICATIONS BY 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.

ANTE LA COMUNIDAD NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL LA UNIÓN VERAPCENSE DE ORGANIZACIONES CAMPESINAS UVOC, MANIFIESTA:

Que por siglos el pueblo Que'qchi', hemos sido despojados de nuestra Madre tierra, explotados y marginados, sucesos que en la historia se han marcado desde el momento de la conquista por el sometimiento de nuestro pueblo a la corona Española, durante los gobiernos liberales, dictadores y mas recientemente fuimos obligados a dejar nuestro territorio derivado de la política represora de **"TIERRA ARRASADA" llevada a cabo por las dictaduras militares (Romeo Lucas y Efraín Ríos Montt) que han gobernado el país**, derivado de ello nuestro pueblo Que'qchi' se ha diseminado a otros territorios fuera del departamento de Alta Verapaz tales como la parte Sur del Peten y Belice, y las costas de Atlántico en el caribe de Guatemala, territorios que ancestralmente han pertenecido al nuestros abuelos el cual antes de la conquista española se denominaba **"TEZULUTLAN" (tierra de guerra)** abarcando desde el río Sartún hasta el Motagua y el mar caribe en el Océano Atlántico.

En la actualidad somos una de las etnias mayas y territorios que mas estamos sumidos en **"Extrema Pobreza"** Derivado de las políticas Neoliberales (capitalistas) llevadas a cabo por los gobiernos serviles a la oligarquía del país y recientemente a las políticas Capitalistas del imperio norteamericano, de igual forma somos explotados y marginados dentro de nuestra propia tierra por Burgueses terratenientes quienes ha robado y saqueado nuestra **Madre Tierra**.

Durante los últimos años nuestra organización, ha sido perseguida y amenazada, nuestras comunidades desalojadas por el ejercito y la policía de forma violenta, nuestros líderes han sido perseguidos, encarcelados y maltratados por causas injustificadas violando nuestros derechos como pueblo, organización y ciudadanos guatemaltecos.

Prueba de lo anterior acontece hoy con la **Persecución, Captura y Encarcelamiento de nuestro Compañero Ramiro Choc** Líder Campesino de catorce (14) comunidades indígenas Que'qchies miembros de UVOC, ubicadas en las riberas del Mar Caribe en el Océano Atlántico del Municipio de Livingston del Departamento de Izabal, quien injustamente ha sido **"Encarcelado"**, derivado de las políticas de represión contra el pueblo por su lucha reivindicativa por el **"Derecho a la Tierra y una Vida Digna" de todo ser humano y Guatemalteco**.

Ante lo expuesto anteriormente

"EXIGIMOS",

Al gobierno de Guatemala **1) La pronta Liberación de Nuestro Compañero y Líder Campesino Ramiro Choc, 2) Garantizar el derecho a la tierra que históricamente nos pertenece, 3) Cesar las capturas y persecución en contra de nuestros líderes, comunidades y organización 4) El establecimiento del dialogo para alcanzar acuerdos en beneficios de la mayoría.**

"TIERRA, TORTILLA Y LIBERTAD SOLO LA REFORMA AGRARIA LO DARA"

Y Seguiremos Luchando Hasta el Amanecer Victorioso; por la Madre Tierra

¡UVOC PRESENTE!

25 DE FEBRERO DÍA NACIONAL DE LA DIGNIDAD DE LAS VICTIMAS DEL CONFLICTO ARMADO INTERNO

La Coordinadora Nacional de Viudas de Guatemala, CONAVIGUA y el Movimiento de Jóvenes Mayas MOJOMAYAS, Miembros de la Coordinación y Convergencia Nacional Maya WAQIB' KEJ, organizaciones Integradas por mujeres viudas y jóvenes víctimas del genocidio, en ocasión del noveno aniversario de la entrega del informe de la Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico y de la conmemoración del Día Nacional de las Víctimas el próximo 25 de febrero, a la opinión publica nacional e internacional.

EXPRESAMOS

- 1- CONAVIGUA rinde homenaje a la memoria y dignidad de las más de 200 mil víctimas del genocidio y de los delitos de lesa humanidad cometidos contra el pueblo maya afectando la cultura, la vida individual y colectiva de hombres, mujeres, ancianos, ancianas, jóvenes, señoritas, niños y niñas, y aunque hayan pasado mas de 25 años, las consecuencias que dejó la guerra aún no han sido superadas.
- 2- Es necesario que todos los entes estatales, se involucren para cumplir con los compromisos del Estado acordados en los Acuerdos de Paz, principalmente en el Acuerdo de Identidad y Derechos de los Pueblos Indígenas y las

recomendaciones emitidas por la Comisión de Esclarecimiento Histórico (CEH) y el informe (REMI), NUNCA MAS de la iglesia católica, así como su real compromiso para construir el tejido social, cultural y económico, psicosocial, y dignificación para las víctimas del conflicto armado interno.

- 3- Para las mujeres viudas por el conflicto armado interno sigue siendo un camino largo difícil de búsqueda de atención a sus necesidades económicas, psicosociales y culturales. Y hemos impulsado procesos de recuperación de nuestra dignidad, asimismo, miles de nosotras que fuimos víctimas de violencia y violación sexual, por parte de militares y ex patrulleros civiles, comisionados militares que se aprovecharon de sus cargos para denigrar la dignidad de las mujeres y que hoy en día siguen sufriendo el miedo, enfermedades psicológicas, pobreza extrema, tristeza, soledad, desempleo, inseguridad y preocupación por el futuro.
- 4- Estamos denunciando los abusos cometidos contra nosotras, nos hemos levantado desde las cenizas de las masacres, para contribuir en la búsqueda de soluciones a los problemas de pobreza, educación, salud y desarrollo.
- 5- El racismo y la discriminación siguen siendo una realidad profundamente arraigada en Guatemala, por tal razón, la lucha contra el racismo y la discriminación debe ser un pilar central y un compromiso de Estado para la construcción de la paz y la democracia en Guatemala.
- 6- Como mujeres y jóvenes mayas, en nuestras comunidades participamos en la defensa de nuestra madre tierra, en la lucha por la erradicación del racismo y la discriminación, la lucha por la edificación de una Guatemala incluyente.

POR LO ANTERIOR, DEMANDAMOS AL CONGRESO DE LA REPUBLICA

1. Que el Honorable Congreso de la República y especialmente la Comisión de Finanzas y la Comisión de Paz y Desminado retomen la iniciativa número 3551 la Ley del Programa Nacional de Resarcimiento y que su discusión sea amplia y participativa con las víctimas del genocidio y de los pueblos indígenas. Asimismo se apruebe la vigencia de la ley de documentación temporal personal para las víctimas del conflicto armado interno,
2. Que el Honorable Congreso de la República y especialmente a la Comisión de Comunidades Indígenas del Congreso de la República agilice la discusión amplia y participativa de la iniciativa de Ley de Consulta a los Pueblos Indígenas, que tenga como objetivo la Aprobación de esta ley conforme a los principios que inspiran el convenio 169 de la Organización Internacional de Trabajo –OIT- y los instrumentos internacionales de derechos humanos.
3. Que el Honorable Congreso de la República retome la iniciativa de ley de reconocimiento de la competencia del Comité para la eliminación de la discriminación racial, regulada en el artículo 14 de la Convención Internacional sobre la Eliminación de todas las formas de Discriminación Racial.
4. Que el Honorable Congreso de la República Promulgue la ley contra el racismo tal como demanda el acuerdo de identidad y derechos de los pueblos indígenas y los tratados y convenios internacionales en materia de derechos humanos.
5. A la Junta Directiva, a los jefes de bloque de las distintas bancadas y a todos los diputados y diputadas, solicitamos que el Organismo Legislativo establezca mecanismos permanentes de consulta a los pueblos indígenas, mediante procedimientos apropiados y en particular a través de sus instituciones representativas cada vez que se prevean medidas legislativas susceptibles de afectarles directamente, tal como lo establece el Convenio 169.

**POR LA SANGRE Y DIGNIDAD DE NUESTROS MARTIRES
VIVA EL 25 DE FEBRERO DIA NACIONAL DE LA DIGNIDAD DE LAS VICTIMAS**

PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS AND CONTENT OF THE ARTICLES AND COMMUNIQUE'S REPRODUCED.

PBI GUATEMALA PROJECT

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