



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALAN PROJECT

MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE - GUATEMALA

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1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

Judge frees 43 detained during the State of Emergency declared in San Juan Sacatepéquez

Guatemala, 05.08.2008 (PL). 43 people who were detained during the State of Emergency issued in San Juan Sacatepéquez on 23 June. The Mixco duty judge granted freedom to the accused on the condition that they sign the court's attendance register on given dates and pay a fine of 2,500 quetzales (around £200). The First Instance Penal Court of Mixco confirmed the charges in three offences: holding illegal meetings and demonstrations, aggravated resistance and public disorder.

National Civil Police arrest ex- member of congress for alleged links to murders of Salvadorian delegates

Guatemala, 29.08.2008 (PL). Former member of congress Manuel de Jesús Castillo, wanted by authorities for his alleged links to the murders of three Salvadorian members of the Central American Parliament (PARLACEN), was captured in a community of the Quezada municipality, Jutiapa. Castillo lost his immunity as a member of the Guatemalan Congress and as mayor elect after being accused of the crimes of conspiracy and perverting the course of justice, for refusing to identify the person known as Montaña 3, Alberto Gutiérrez Arévalo. Gutiérrez Arévalo has already been detained by the police in connection with the murder of the three Salvadorian politicians and their driver in February 2007.

Organisations lobby for rights of indigenous communities draft law

Guatemala, 08.09.2008 (AC). The Centre for Legal Action in Human Rights (CALDH), the National Indigenous and Campesino Coordinator (CONIC), the Political Association of Mayan Women and the Mayan Defenders Office, are promoting a proposed law that addresses the principal demands of indigenous communities. The proposed law develops and expands those specific rights of the indigenous communities that are not reflected in the Constitution of the Republic or national legislation. Among other demands, the law would cover respect for sacred sites and indigenous languages, access to land, right to bilingual education, community consultations and the Mayan justice system.

Violent forced evictions from market are denounced in Coatepeque

Guatemala, 22.08.2008 (PL). Combined security forces including the Army and the National Civil Police evicted sellers and traders from various traveling markets in Coatepeque, Quetzaltenango, with excessive force when they refused to relocate.

LAND

Government and indigenous leaders reach agreement

Guatemala, 09.08.2008 (PL, EP, SV, ND, AD). After blocking several stretches of highway across the country for several hours, and holding demonstrations in several cities, indigenous groups achieved an agreement "in principal" with the Government. The protests focused on opposition to mining exploration contracts, and the forestalling of the construction of further hydroelectric plants, and on alternative demands for access to land, and public programmes. The event marks the start of a dialogue seeking a solution to the demands presented by representatives of the Agrarian Platform, the Council of Communities of the West, the Campesino Assembly, and Waqib'Kej in the Presidential Palace. Chief amongst the demands is that discrimination and racism in the justice system are ended.

GLOBALISATION

Human Rights Ombudsman warns Government of food problems

Guatemala, 05.08.2008 (PL). The Human Rights Ombudsman, Sergio Morales, presented a report to the Government in which he revealed a delicately balanced food situation and a worrying outlook for the future, if steps are not taken to reduce food prices and combat the chronic malnutrition that effects more than half of the country's children, and the inflationary increases which compound the problem. He also reported that urgent changes were needed in economic policy, which is oriented to produce foods for the international market to the detriment of Guatemalan consumers.

OTHERS

Members of Congress sign anti-abortion document

Guatemala, 14.08.2008 (EP, SV, CA). "From our ovaries take your rosaries!", shouted approximately one hundred feminists congregating in front of the legislative palace on Wednesday. They were protesting what they considered to be the meddling of the Church and State in allowing congress members to sign the "book of life", an anti-abortion initiative. Participating in Congress' actions were representatives of evangelical churches and the board of the Legislature.

Alma Odeth Chacón, of the Terra Viva (Live Earth) women's movement, said that the sixty-five thousand abortions that occur each year in Guatemala are certainly an "abominable crime", because they are the result of women's lack of access to health services.

Seventy of 158 congress members signed the document, among those the FRG member Aristedes Crespo, president of Congress, and the remaining members of the legislative board.

16,390 Guatemalan immigrants expelled by the United States

Guatemala, 13.08.2008 (ND). So far this year, the United States has expelled 16,390 Guatemalan immigrants. This month, two flights of deportees have arrived, one from Houston, Texas and the other from Meza, Arizona.

SOURCES: Prensa Libre (PL), Siglo Veintiuno (SV), La Hora (LH), El Periódico (EP), Tele Noticiario: Tele Diario (TD), Nuestro Diario (ND), Agencia Cerigua (AC), Diario de Centro América (CA), Centro de Reportes Informativos sobre Guatemala (CERIGUA), Noti Siete (N7), Al Día (AD)

2. ACTIVIDADES DE PBI GUATEMALA: EN GUATEMALA

Team: María Jose Urgel Riquelme (Spain), Marion Sornay (France), Maren Enders (Germany), Johanna van Strien (Holland), Valentina Gori (Italy), Wiebke Schramm (Germany), Jacqueline Benfield (United Kingdom), Maria Giovanna Tejido Vasquez (Spain), Carolina Tessier (Canada), Silvia Weber (Germany), Jean-Jacques Ambresin

2.1. DIALOGUE WITH GUATEMALAN AUTHORITIES AND 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 June meetings were held with the following authorities:

Diplomatic Corps:

- Annemarie de Ruiter y Rein Koelstra, Human Rights Coordinator in the Dutch Embassy
- Jean-Pierre Villard, Swiss Ambassador

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Pablo Francisco Juárez Salazar, Second in Command, National Civil Police (PNC) Santa Cruz
- Josué Estuardo Villatoro, Vice Minister of Communication, Infrastructure, Housing and Transport, Guatemala City
- Iván Contreras, Subsecretary of the Secretariat for Agrarian Issues, Guatemala City
- Werner Yovani Leal Yaxcal, Chief of Police Station 11, National Civil Police (PNC), Guatemala City
- Luz Maribel Ramos Peña, Governor of Izabal, Puerto Barrios
- Mario Franco, Governor of Zacapa, Zacapa
- Mayra Roxsana Sandoval, Auxiliary of the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office of Zacapa, Zacapa
- Gloria Villasana, Chief of International Cooperation, Institute for Public and Penal Defence (IDPP).
- Erik Esquivel Rolando Cepeta, First Official of the National Civil Police (PNC), Zacapa
- Alma Luz Guerrero, Ministerial Office Adviser, Interior Ministry
- Rosa María Juárez, Human Rights Coordinator, National Civil Police (PNC), Guatemala City
- Simon Cabrera, Inter-Institutional Coordinator for Marginal Settlements
- Ana Gladis Ollas, Women's Advocacy Department, Human Rights Ombudsman's Office

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 that helps us to develop our analysis of the internal political situation. During June meetings were held with the following organisations:

Organisations and individuals from Guatemalan Civil Society:

- David Morales, Representative of the Trade Union Federation of Food Workers, Agro-industrial and Similar (FESTRAS)
- Iduvina Hernández, Director of Security in Democracy (SEDEM)

International Organisations and Agencies:

- International Accompaniment in Guatemala Coordination, CAIG, Guatemala City
- Human Rights Commission of the International Organisations Forum, FONGI, Guatemala City

2.3 ACCOMPANIMENT

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. In August we continued to accompany him in his travels between his home and office, as well as to meetings and activities outside of the capital.

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. In August we have remained in contact with the leaders of UVOC in their visits to the capital and with visits to their office in Alta Verapaz. We remain concerned about the security of the members of the members of the organization as they continue receiving threats and noticing surveillance around their office in Santa Cruz, Alta Verapaz.

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 of 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. During August, PBI maintained regular contact with Eloyda and remained attentive to the activities of the other members of the association.

Background: Eloisa Mejia 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 gratis' in the town of El Estor and as enemies of the town and the State. The letter mentioned that the law of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" would be applied.

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. In August we accompanied the association at an reburial in Comalapa and continued with weekly visits to their office.

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 July, we accompanied Julio Archila and his son to the High Criminal Labor Court of Malacatan, San Marcos, where the official dismissal of the robbery case against him and his son was awaited. The anticipated hearing for Julio was cancelled at the last moment. This was the third time that the Tribunal cancelled the hearing at the last moment. Finally, at the time of publication, the conclusions of the judge were made known with criminal proceedings suspended in favour of Julio and his son, Antonio. In August we maintained contact with them, especially with Julio Archila.

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 quetzals. 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. During August we kept in contact with Zulma and accompanied her in journeys around the city. In addition we have paid weekly visits to the organisation's office and we continue with preparations for a tour of the United States, Canada, and Europe that will take place in September and October with national PBI groups.

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 **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. We continued accompanying Roly Escobar, who during this month has pushed for dialogue with the Vice-minister of housing.

The situation of the marginal settlers is VERY ALARMING especially in the capital due to the heavy rains that affect the country during this season and which provoke serious wash-outs and landslides, leaving many families homeless and without basic necessities for living. In many cases, despite the danger, families do not abandon their precarious houses for fear of losing the little that they have, resulting in terrible accidents which can cost the lives of entire families.

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 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. This month we have continued with the accompaniment of José Manuel Morales and other members of the CRP.

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.

We started accompaniment of **Lesbiradas** in August 2008 after the daughter of one member, also an activist, was the victim of direct acts of intimidation threatening her life by different State security forces. The actions have been reported to the Public Ministry (MP) and to the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) as well as to the Unity for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. In principal, the threats are connected to the women's activism and for Lesbiradas it is proof of the presence of a social cleansing strategy in the country. We accompany the mother and the daughter in their daily activities. In August, both continued to suffer serious intimidation and surveillance.

Background: The Lesbiradas collective is involved in the defense and promotion of human rights of Guatemalan lesbian women, promoting among other things, the self-determination of one's body and sexuality, for lesbians in their struggle against an exclusive, patriarchal system and particularly the discrimination and systematic violence that they face. The two women that we have been accompanying participate in various social movements, for which on three occasions in July, one of the activists was directly threatened with death at gunpoint by agents of the PNC on July 21, 2008.

During August 2008 we started to accompany the **Association for the Defence of Montaña de las Granadillas ("Passion Fruit Mountain")**. Several members of this Zacapa organisation received death threats in relation to their work to make Passion Fruit Mountain a protected area. The forest of the area is in danger of disappearance due to illegal logging, excessive cattle farming and single-crop farming. During this month we held various meetings with local authorities to present PBI in the region and communicate our concerns about the case. We spent time in the town and accompanied the members of the association in various activities around the mountain.

Background: The association was created six years ago, when a group of residents realised that the ecosystem of the mountain was in danger due to logging, monoculture, and the extreme increase in cattle-farming. It was not only the mountain that was disappearing,, they were alarmed above all by the disappearance of the water reserves, given that all of the region's water comes from the mountain's forests. The organization sought the support of the Lutheran Church and the Madre Selva Collective. These organizations carried out an analysis of the deterioration of the area, and found that the lower part of the mountain had lost 70% of forest cover due to illegal logging and the fact that forestry law is very weakly applied in the region. Now, the principal objective is to protect 20-30% of the remaining forest and replant other trees through harvest activities. 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 that surround it. The threats began when they tried to denounce the illegal timber trade.

2.4 FOLLOW UP

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, diminishing the level of accompaniment in the measure that his security situation improved. During July, after analyzing the security situation of the organisation and of the person being accompanied, we decided to move the case to follow-up status. In August we have maintained contact and remain attentive to their situation. The organization closed the case this month.

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."

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. In August, we remained in contact with the organisation.

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).

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 this month we have remained in contact with them.

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.

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. This month we maintained contact with the members of the organisation by telephone and through visits to the office.

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, which was provided.

2.5 OBSERVATION

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

On 8 August, Indigenous Peoples' Day, we observed the march organised by the Coordination and National Convergence Maya Waqib'Kej, from Morazán Park to the Presidential Palace, where some public declarations were made. There were around 200 participants from Guatemala City-based organisations such as CONAVIGUA, Sector de Mujeres, CALDH and regional organisations. Among the activities were political speeches demanding rights for indigenous communities as well as music, dance and street art.

This month we also observed the Commemorative Activities for the 1st anniversary of the murder of José Méndez (Pepe), son of the human rights activist Amílcar Méndez, founder of the Council of Ethnic Communities Runujel Junam (CERJ), and with whom PBI has historical links, having accompanied him in the late 80s and early 90s. The organisers prepared a small demonstration around the area where Pepe Méndez was murdered. Among those present were Nery Rodenas (Archbishop's Human Rights Office), Norma Cruz (Survivors' Foundation), unionists and family members. It was an activity held to remember all unresolved murders in Guatemala.

We attended a press conference of the Committee of the United Front in the Defence and Protection of Communal Forests of Juchanep, Tonicapán.

3. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA – OUTSIDE OF 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.

In Australia, Eva Scarfe, member of the project committee and PBI Australia link, met with members of PBI Australia on August 3, to bring them up to date with the work of the project, and to assist in the preparation of an advocacy tour around Canberra. This tour has taken place this month, and has included meetings with Australian authorities in order to strengthen the Political Support Network. PBI Australia members have communicated the specific concerns of the Guatemala Project regarding the current situation of human rights defenders in Guatemala (including economic, social and cultural rights) to various members of the Australian Government, politicians and functionaries of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT).

In Europe, Kerstin Reemtsma, European Representative of the project, participated in a meeting of PBI Germany's working group of support to the project. In this meeting she was able to describe the current situation of Guatemalan human rights defenders and provide an update on the work of PBI Guatemala.

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.



COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

Criminalización, represión y violencia hacia la juventud

El 12 de agosto conmemoramos el día nacional e internacional de la juventud, sin embargo no tenemos mucho que celebrar, ello de cara a las constantes violaciones a los derechos humanos de la juventud, particularmente el derecho a la vida y el derecho al debido proceso, ambos consagrados en la Constitución Política de la República.

En diversas oportunidades organizaciones sociales hemos denunciado públicamente las violaciones a derechos humanos contra la adolescencia y juventud en el país, entre algunos hechos: la arbitrariedad, ilegalidad y abuso de autoridad por parte de la Policía Nacional Civil en la detención de adolescentes y jóvenes, y el involucramiento y participación de fuerzas de seguridad del Estado en ejecuciones extrajudiciales y asesinatos de jóvenes.

Sólo en el 2007 se registraron 3,060 asesinatos de adolescentes y jóvenes, entre 14 y 29 años, de los cuales 276 eran mujeres y 2,784 hombres; asimismo, se registraron 21,994 detenciones de adolescentes y jóvenes en el mismo rango etéreo de los que 2,142 fueron mujeres y 19,852 hombres. Este año la tendencia puede incrementarse, considerando el aumento de la violencia y la represión policial en contra de la juventud, siendo más de 1,000 personas asesinadas en lo que va del año.

Los mismos medios de comunicación, otras instancias internacionales y organizaciones diversas han evidenciado la existencia y operación de estructuras que se encargan de la ejecución de jóvenes estigmatizados, la mal llamada limpieza social. Las características de los asesinatos así como los patrones de su muerte, manifiestan la práctica de una forma específica de actuar sin que hasta el momento se hayan tomado las medidas necesarias para erradicar este tipo de hechos.

Ante esta situación de represión y criminalización hacia la juventud y la exclusión y discriminación a la que se enfrenta, el Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos, CALDH, EXIGE:

Al Ministro de Gobernación continuar con la depuración de la PNC y llevar a los tribunales de justicia a aquellos elementos que forman parte de estas estructuras y que están vinculados en violaciones a derechos humanos.

De igual forma al Ministerio Público, cumplir con su mandato de persecución penal apegado a derecho, sin seguir generando investigaciones y acusaciones sin fundamento en contra de adolescentes y jóvenes que han sido privados de libertad, únicamente para justificar su "eficacia", violentado cotidianamente el derecho al debido proceso y que sólo ha generado la privación de libertad de adolescentes y jóvenes por largos períodos sin contar con pruebas reales y contundentes, pero que ello ha dañado la integridad e imagen de las y los jóvenes.

Además, demandamos al Gobierno de Guatemala la inmediata implementación del Plan Nacional para el Desarrollo de la Juventud, compromiso de campaña, designando los recursos económicos y humanos necesarios, lo que sin duda contribuirá al desarrollo integral de la juventud y la disminución de la violencia de y contra la juventud.

Asimismo, exigimos al Estado de Guatemala respetar el derecho a la libertad, la organización, participación y expresión de la juventud, ya que estamos a un paso de entender los hechos arriba enunciados como una Política de Estado de Represión y Criminalización hacia la juventud.

Por el derecho a un país justo

Guatemala, 14 de agosto de 2008

Las mujeres Mestizas, Mayas, Xincas y Garífunas, miembros de las organizaciones que constituimos la alianza política Sector de Mujeres manifestamos en el día Internacional de los Pueblos Indígenas, que:

REPUDIAMOS LA USURPACION Y MILITARIZACION DE LOS TERRITORIOS

CONDENAMOS LA DESTRUCCION DEL MEDIO AMBIENTE PROVOCADA POR EL ACTUAL MODELO CAPITALISTA DE DESARROLLO.

LO GRITA TAMBIEN LA MADRE TIERRA

EXIGIMOS UN ALTO A ALZA DE LOS PRECIOS DE LA CANASTA BASICA

Y UN ALTO AL ABUSO Y VIOLENCIA CONTRA NOSOTRAS.

EXIJIMOS AL GOBIERNO Y LOS OTROS ORGANISMOS DEL ESTADO

- Generar un Desarrollo Rural que incluya los derechos de las mujeres en su diversidad, el respecto a los bienes naturales y que sea la base para que la población indígena y campesina eleve su calidad de vida.
- Vincular los resultados de las consultas populares comunitarias a las decisiones gubernamentales, en respeto a la Soberanía del Pueblo.
- Readecuar programas gubernamentales en donde su prioridad sea el apoyo a esfuerzos comunitarios de economía solidaria con énfasis en los grupos de mujeres.
- Generación de empleo digno para las mujeres
- Establecer medidas y sanciones para que no se especule con los productos básicos, generar precios Topes y apoyo subsidiado a familias en riesgo de hambruna.
- Fortalecer las instancias que promuevan una vida libre de Violencia, Racismo y Discriminación

Por mí, por nosotras y por las otras
El Futuro no llega se Construye
Nuestra Fuerza de Mujeres está en la Diversidad
Sector de Mujeres
.. K'at, 8 de Agosto del 2008

**PBI GUATEMALA NO SE IDENTIFICA NECESARIAMENTE CON LAS OPINIONES Y CONTENIDO DE
LOS ARTÍCULOS Y COMUNICADOS REPRODUCIDOS**

- PROYECTO PBI GUATEMALA -

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