



PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL – GUATEMALAN PROJECT

MONTHLY INFORMATION PACKAGE - GUATEMALA

Number 60, September 2008

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

1. NOTES ON THE CURRENT SITUATION

IMPUNITY

Organisations and government bodies condemn attempt against environmental activist

Guatemala, 05.09.2008 (CA, PL, LH, CA).- An assassination attempt was made against Yuri Melini, Director General of the Centre for Environmental and Social Legal Action (CALAS). Melini was attacked with a firearm when he drove to a press conference. The attack was considered by environmentalists as a warning for those who promote the preservation of natural resources, as they affect, according to them, "the interests of hidden powers". The Environment Minister, Luis Ferrate, expressed his indignation with the incident, and stated that at least a dozen environmental activists formed part of a list of persons threatened for the work that they carry out.

President denounces espionage and dismisses the heads of the SAAS and the SAE

Guatemala, 05.09.2008 (EP, PL, SV, LH, CA).- President Álvaro Colom denounced that seven recording devices and two hidden cameras had been found in his office in zone 14 of the capital, and evidence of receivers in his house and the office of the first lady. At the same time, he announced that he had accepted the resignation of Carlos Quintanilla, the chief of the Secretariat of Administrative Affairs and Presidential Security (SAAS) and in his place named Ricard Marroquin Rosada. Gustavo Solano, chief of the Presidential Secretariat of Strategic Analysis (SAE), was also dismissed.

The Women's Sector denounces the failure to apply the Law Against Femicide

Guatemala, 09.09.2008 (CA).- Representatives of the Women's Sector demonstrated this Monday to express their concern that the Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women has not been implemented in an effective manner, given that such murders have increased. "The reports of violence against women have increased around 10%, compared with the year before", said Sonia Esobedo, representative of the organisation.

Guatemala figures in list of countries that fail to combat corruption

Guatemala, 23.09.2008 (AC, SV).- The agency Transparency International (TI) confirmed in Berlin, Germany, that Guatemala is on the list of countries plagued by corruption. The annual report regarding the Index of Perception of Corruption (IPC), placed Guatemala in 96th place on the list, with a factor of 3.1, above Costa Rica, El Salvador and Mexico.

Woman assumes leadership of the police in Guatemala

Guatemala, 23.09.08 (LH, PL).- President Alvaro Colom named as the new Director General of the National Civil Police (PNC) Marlene Blanco Lapola, who, at 42 years of age and with 22 years of service has held various positions within the PNC. The appointment of a woman as the head of the PNC is unprecedented in Guatemala, and augers change in a body notable today for corruption, inefficiency and a lack of credibility.

LAND

Peasant organisations demand a dignified dialogue with the government

Guatemala, 02.09.2008 (AC).- Diverse peasant organisations, among them the Agrarian Platform and the Council of Peoples of San Marcos, have resigned from the round of negotiations established with the executive following the August 8th mobilisation. They considered the government functionaries' failure to attend the meeting a 'joke'. The peasant organisations called upon President Alvaro Colom to comply with the agreement achieved on August 8th and to demonstrate his political will through the establishment of a more dignified dialogue.

According to the CNOC, three thousand families have been displaced in the Verapaces

Guatemala, 11.09.2008 (PL).- According to Carlos Morales, General Coordinator of the Nacional Coordinator of Campesino Organisations (CNOC), during the previous administration and the current government, some three thousand families living in the regional departments of Alta and Baja Verapaz have been forcibly evicted from their homes. They now live on public roadsides, without any security whatsoever. During the Government of Oscar Berger, 38 communities were evicted from the areas in which they were living. Currently, there are between 100 and 150 communities at risk of being forcibly removed. The leader argued that, despite the Government implementing two separate negotiations, there have been no concrete advances.

Government launches PRORURAL

Guatemala, 12.09.2008 (LH).- The Government has launched the PRORURAL Project, a programme of the Commission of Rural Development, in order to modernise the national system of agriculture. The PRORURAL system has as its objective the promotion of food production. However, the peasant sector has criticised the government programme, arguing that they do not respond to the true necessities of the situation.

GLOBALISATION

Demands in Zacapa that the mountain Las Granadillas is declared a Protected Area

Guatemala, 01.09.2008 (AD) – Thousands of residents of Zacapa demonstrated on the streets demanding that the mountain Las Granadillas, the principle source of water for the population, be declared a Protected Area. The activity was organised by the Association for the Protection of Las Granadillas Mountain and included the presence of church authorities, civil society and students. At the end of the march a written petition was delivered to the Governor of the Department.

Residents of San Antonio Suchitepequez reject privatisation of water service

San Antonio Suchitepéquez, 03.09.2008 (PL) – Hundreds of people participated in a march to protest against the local council's intention to seek bidders for a concession of the piped water service. They also demanded the reappointment of the fifth municipal member, Ismael de Leon Quinto, who was relieved of power by the council after informing the local population about the privatisation of this public service.

Cultivation of African palm causes social conflicts over environmental damage in Alta Verapaz

Guatemala, 03.09.2008 (AC) Planting African palm for the production of biofuels in the regional department of Alta Verapaz is generating social conflicts over environmental damage in communities that see themselves affected by this activity which causes deforestation and contamination of water sources. According to electronic reports, the production of African palm in Guatemala is concentrated in the hands of only six family groups.

Water tribunal concurs with complaint regarding San Marcos mine

Guatemala, 12.09.2008 (PL, Tribunal Latinoamericano del Agua) – Communities and municipal authorities accused the Montana Exploration company of contaminating their water sources in a complaint to the Latin American Water Tribunal. 10,000 people from 12 villages have problems of insufficient water due to the drying up of their wells. The Tribunal subsequently began hearings in order to investigate 10 cases of the deterioration of water sources in North, Central and South America, and on September 12 it found the Montana Exploration mining company of Guatemala S.A. to be responsible for the damage to the environmental and to the population of San Miguel Ixtahuacan and Sipacapa.

SOURCES: Prensa Libre (PL), Siglo Veintiuno (SV), La Hora (LH), El Periódico (EP), Tele Noticiero: 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: Valentina Gori (Italy), Wiebke Schramm (Germany), Jacqueline Benfield (United Kingdom), Maria Giovanna Tejido Vasquez (Spain), Carolina Tessier (Canada), Silvia Weber (Germany), Jean-Jacques Ambresin (Switzerland)

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:

- Norbert Eichler, Consul, German Embassy
- Sonia Alvarez, Second Secretary (Human Rights), Spanish Embassy
- Ramaden Kaminemi, Counsellor of the Canadian Embassy
- Lucy Chang, First Secretary, US Embassy

Guatemalan Authorities:

- Victor Duarte, Union for the Development of Popular Housing
- José Domingo Sical, Mayor, Villa Nueva
- Diego Leiva, Supervisor of the Regional Offices of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)
- Byron Lacs, Leader of the Municipality of Zacapa
- Gustavo Acevedo, representative of the Environmental Section, Municipality of Zacapa
- William Melgar y Luís Larrazabal, National Institute of Forestry (INAB)

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:

- Erwin Orrego and representatives of the Coordinator of Informal Economy Sellers of Coatepeque
- Amílcar y Carlos Pop, Association of Mayan Lawyers and Notaries of Guatemala
- Luz Méndez, Adviser, National Union of Guatemalan Women (UNAMG)
- Mario Minera, Centre for Human Rights Legal Action (CALDH)
- Eduardo Aguirre, Public Relations, Cementos Progreso
- Claudia Samayoa, Consultant, Union of Human Rights Defenders
- Rafael Maldonado, Coordinator, Centre for Environmental and Social Legal Action (CALAS)

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 September we continued to accompany him in his movements between his home and office and in meetings and activities outside 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 September we have remained in contact with the leaders of UVOC in their visits to the capital, in visits to their office in Alta Verapaz, and in the negotiation rounds in Coban. We remain concerned about the security of the members of the organization as they continue receiving threats and noting surveillance around their office in Santa Cruz, Alta Verapaz. As a member organization, the UVOC was recently named the coordinating organisation of the CNOC (National Coordinator of Campesino Organisations), a responsibility it will hold for the next two years.

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 peasant families that live in the Moca Estate were violently evicted, leaving several people with gunshot wounds. In July 2006 there was a confrontation between two groups of peasants leaving two dead and thirty nine injured of the evicted peasants. The peasants of 'La Moca' continue to live on the margins of the road whilst they negotiate with the two owners of the estate and the authorities in the national table of negotiation of resolution of agrarian conflicts, in order to find a place to live. The case has been deemed urgent for the situation of extreme poverty in which the families live.

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. During September PBI maintained contact with Eloyda and provided a protective presence in El Estor.

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

Eloyda Mejía has suffered a number of threats as a result of her work. On 21st February 2004, during a conference on the future of the lake in El Estor, Izabal, she received yet more serious threats, which she reported to the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH). In February 2006 Eloyda Mejía's restaurant wall was graffitied with the words "Yes to CGN" (Guatemalan Nickel Company)." Since late 2006 Eloyda Mejía has had to deal with a legal process accusing her of usurping lands. This legal action is seen by her as a form of persecution and intimidation intended to force her to abandon her work against the mining company CGN in El Estor. In the months of January and February 2007 we accompanied Eloyda and ASALI during a worsening of the situation in El Estor, after a tense situation arose between groups of campesinos that had occupied lands, CGN and state actors who wished to remove them. In October 2007, Eloyda Mejía received a threatening letter that mentioned her and other active members of civil society 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 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 September we accompanied the association at a reburial in La Cumbre de Tecpan, Chimaltenango and exhumation in reburial in Santa Apolonia (Chimaltenango), 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 Peasant Workers (MTC)**, an entity of the Social Pastoral Office of the Diocese of San Marcos. MTC is made up of associations of peasant communities working to defend their labour rights. In particular, we accompany its co-founder, **Julio Archila** in his work as adviser to the communities and during the court proceedings against him. In September we visited Julio Archila in his home and maintained regular communication with him in his visits to the capital.

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

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 September we kept in contact with Jorge Lopez and Zulma and visited the office of OASIS, and we continued with the activities of preparation of a tour of the United States, Canada, and Europe that will take place in September and October in coordination 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) and the Institute for Comparative Studies in the Penal Sciences of Guatemala (ICCPG). In the month of August 2008, the Prosecutor's Office (MP) reopened the case.

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 particular, we accompany **Roly Escobar**, CONAPAMG's General Coordinator, after he received a death threat on September 10, 2006, for which we activated Support Network. In September 2008 we observed the march September 30 on the International Habitat Day, in which CONAPAMG participated. In addition, during the rainy season we were concerned for the families that live in the precarious settlements owing to the risk of landslides.

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. He has also been the subject of defamations against him in the media.

We accompany the **Commission of Peaceful Resistance of San Rafael Pie de la Cuesta (CRP)**. We received a request for accompaniment from Jose Manuel Morales, Vice President of the organisation, after the founding members of the Commission were harassed and attacked by the police during after a meeting September 15, 2007. 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, members of the organization have met with the Ministry of the Environment and Natural Resources and with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. We met with members of CRP in San Rafael and El Rodeo and have maintained contact.

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 September 15, 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 July 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 Union for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders. In principle, 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. In September, we continued our accompaniment and had meetings with other entities in order to continue in our analysis of the situation.

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 of the PNC on July 21, 2008. In August 2008 they have continued to suffer surveillance and acts of harassment by state security forces.

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 Montaña de las Granadillas a protected area. The forest of the area is in danger of disappearance due to illegal logging, excessive cattle farming and single-crop farming. We have held various meetings with local authorities to present PBI in the region and communicate our concerns about the case. In September we accompanied members of the Association in some activities carried out around the mountain, such as a tree planting event. We were also present in its General Assembly during which a new governing council was elected. The threats against the association and its members continue to be a source of concern.

Background: The association was created six years ago, when a group of residents realised that the ecosystem of the mountain was in danger due to logging, monoculture, and the extreme increase in cattle-farming. It was not only the mountain that was disappearing,, they were alarmed above all by the disappearance of the water reserves, given that all of the region's water comes from the mountain's forests. The organisation sought the support of the Lutheran Church and the Madre Selva Collective. These organizations carried out an analysis of the deterioration of the area, and found that the lower part of the mountain had lost 70% of forest cover due to illegal logging and the fact that forestry law is very poorly applied in the region. Now the principal objective is to protect 20-30% of the remaining forest and reforestation. The association's members want to convert the mountain into a protected area but this

proposal has proven difficult and dangerous because of the economic interests 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 2008 PCS closed the case, using it to serve as an example of the impunity in the country. In September we have maintained contact and continue to be attentive to the situation.

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 September, 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 September 4, we observed a press conference given by CALAS (Guatemalan Centre for Environmental and Social Legal Action) in order to denounce the attempt on the life of Yuri Melini, Director of the organisation.

On 30 September, we observed in the capital a march organised by the MPG (Guatemalan Residents Movement) in which CONAPAMG participated. When the marchers arrived at the Congress, a delegation was received by the Housing Commission in order to enter into a dialogue regarding the draft law had been proposed on August 4, 2008, lobbying the members of the Commission to consider its necessity.

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.

Kerstin Reemtsma, European Representative of the Project, participated in the meeting of the Guatemalan Working Group of the network the Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico (CIFCA) in Brussels on September 29.

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 INDIGENA Y CAMPESINA –CONIC-
Miembro de UASP, Frente Contra la Minería, Waq'ib Kiev, CLOC y Vía Campesina.



COORDINADORA NACIONAL INDIGENA Y CAMPESINA –CONIC-

AMENAZAS DE REPRESION CONTRA CONIC CONTINÚAN

Hoy jueves 11 de Septiembre, cuando en nuestro calendario Maya marca Kae' Tijax, fuentes fidedignas de CONIC informan y alertan de nuevos ataques a la organización, principalmente

saquear nuestras oficinas centrales. Tendrán la intención de llevarse documentos, datos y archivos de nuestras comunidades, nombres de líderes y lideresas, incluso llevarse aparatos útiles para nuestro trabajo de organización y lucha, como pueblo maya y campesino. Para encubrir sus planes terroristas, estarán pasando como “delincuencia común” el allanamiento a la oficina de CONIC que quieren ejecutar esta semana.

Esta nueva amenaza es la continuidad o seguimiento de los planes de represión contra líderes y lideresas de CONIC que denunciarnos el 26 de agosto recién pasado.

Este plan de represión inicia después de la marcha maya y campesina que realizamos el 5 de agosto, en ciudad Guatemala, con la participación de más de 30 mil miembros de base de CONIC, donde logramos reestablecer el acuerdo de apoyo del gobierno a las 31,951 productores de granos básicos, quedando pendiente la discusión de la problemática agraria y el alto costo de la vida.

Los planes están claros, desgastar a nuestra organización maya y campesina hasta destruirla. Para lograr sus objetivos tendrán que asesinar a los 150 mil miembros de base de nuestra CONIC. Crean que con sus amenazas dejamos de luchar por los derechos mayas y campesinos, por la madre tierra y el territorio, por la justicia social, por la educación y la salud, por una vida digna y humana. Seguimos firmes en la lucha, porque el grito de lucha surge desde los descalzos y desnutridos, desde los excluidos y excluidas.

Exigimos al gobierno de Álvaro Colom:

1. Cumplir con sus promesas de arrendamiento de tierra y subsidio a las 31,951 familia.
2. Garantizar la seguridad a la dirigencia de CONIC
3. Y de manera urgente proteger la oficina central de CONIC ante el Plan de asalto y robos que quieren realizar los enemigos a partir de próximas horas.

A todos los dirigentes, lideresas, comunidades de CONIC a seguir tomando las medidas de seguridad necesaria y denunciar cualquier ataque que sufran.

Asimismo alertamos a las demás organizaciones mayas, campesinas, de derechos humanos, sindicales, estudiantiles, de medio ambiente, a no permitir que golpeen a nuestras organizaciones y sus líderes y lideresas.

**LA DEMOCRACIA NO SE CONTRUYE CON REPRESIÓN.
NECESITAMOS ALIMENTOS PARA ENFRENTAR EL HAMBRE.**

Guatemala, 11 de Septiembre, 2008.

COORDINADORA NACIONAL DE ORGANIZACIONES CAMPESINAS

CNOC

La Coordinadora Nacional de Organizaciones Campesinas CNOC integrada por UVOC, KABAWIL, CONDEG, CUC, COMUNIDAD XINKA, CODECA, ACDIP

Expresamos nuestro repudio y desacuerdo ante el anuncio efectuado por el Presidente de la República Álvaro Colom, sobre su intención de incrementar el número de elementos militares en

nuestro país, cuyo argumento del mandatario para implementar dicha política, es para reforzar los patrullajes fronterizos y de seguridad ciudadana y así modernizar el sistema de las fuerzas combinadas.

Según el Mandatario guatemalteco se necesita readecuar la institución castrense para enfrentar las amenazas del crimen organizado.

Las Organizaciones que conformamos la CNOG manifestamos que dicha decisión únicamente retrocederá los pocos avances que han existido en el país después de la firma de los acuerdos de paz (año 1996). Tomando en cuenta que los más de treinta años de guerra interna que vivió Guatemala muchas comunidades Indígenas y Campesinas fueron amenazadas y masacradas por elementos del ejército recuerdos no gratos que aun persisten en la memoria de las comunidades afectadas.

Por tal Razón exigimos al Presidente de la República Álvaro Colom Caballeros y a autoridades de la cartera de seguridad se implementen políticas para hacer que se respete el derecho a la seguridad de todo ciudadano, políticas que no atenten ni física ni psicológicamente a los guatemaltecos.

Guatemala, 19 de septiembre 2008

PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESARILLY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS EXPRESSED IN AND CONTENT OF THE ARTICLES AND PRESS RELEASES REPRODUCED

- PBI GUATEMALA PROJECT -

Team Office in Guatemala

3ª Avenida "A", 3-51, Zona 1, Ciudad de Guatemala
Telephone/fax: (+502) 2220 1032
E-mail: pbiguatemala@intelnet.com

Project Coordination Office

C/ Romero 9; 28720 Bustarviejo, Madrid (España)
Telephone/fax: (+34) 918 482 496
E-mail: pbiguate@pangea.org
Web page: www.pbi-guatemala.org