

Peace Brigades International

in Mexico

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Notes on the Current Situation

The Merida Initiative

On October 31, 2007, the Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Patricia Espinosa, spoke to the Commission on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives to present information about the so-called Merida Initiative. This initiative, informally known as Plan Mexico for its similarity to Plan Colombia (the U.S. Aid plan to Colombia to fight drug trafficking), has been in negotiation since the bilateral meeting of the U.S. and Mexico in Merida last March. According to the Foreign Secretary, this initiative involves a strong investment by the United States in Mexico - and provides technical equipment, training of police and military forces, and a stronger collaboration of intelligence agencies of the two countries. In 2005, Mexico, the U.S. and Canada (already united by the North American Free Trade Agreement since 1994) created the Security and Prosperity Alliance of North America, with the goal of developing a unified approach to security matters.

During the speech, several legislators criticized the fact that the agreements were made without Congressional approval, and that the initiative, whose budget would have to be approved by the U.S. Congress in February, would put national sovereignty at risk. Representative Samuel Aguilar Solis (PRI) denounced the existence of a double discourse regarding the matter: an internal one in which authorities systematically deny the existence of information about the agreements, and only generally talk about fighting crime and drug trafficking, and another in the U.S. which states that the goal of the initiative is to fight terrorism and to secure the borders.² Representative and Military General Roberto Badillo (PRI) expressed his doubts about the U.S. government's intentions regarding the aid package, and his concern about the risks that it implies for national sovereignty. The initiative allows for the investment of around 1.4 billion dollars that would be divided amongst the Department of Public Security and the National Attorney General's Office at 60%, and the Department of National Defense at 40%.³

Attorney General Eduardo Medina Mora traveled to Bogota in October where he met with U.S. and Colombian authorities in order to share information and experiences about fighting drug trafficking, and where he may have requested support in breaking up the Mexican drug cartels.⁴

Reforms to the criminal justice system

On December 12, the House of Representatives, with votes by the PAN, the PRI and some of the PRD, approved a measure involving constitutional reform of criminal justice and public security. The measure was passed to the Senate for review and among other things, it states that, "homes can be raided without a court warrant if a

life is found to evidently be at risk, or if a third party provides such information." In addition, the measure will govern local police and Attorney General's Offices, and will give a green light so that telephone conversations can be recorded and accepted as proof of a crime.⁵

The President of the Commission on Justice (PRI) said that the measure places limits, ends police abuses, gives the State the tools to combat organized crime, and the tools to reconstruct the social fabric. However, the Consultative Board of the National Human Rights Commission stated that some of the proposals "could mean a setback in terms of human rights."⁶

Academics and civil human rights organizations showed their discontent towards this reform and asked the Senate to revise the initiative in order to avoid "incorporating restrictions on fundamental human rights into the Constitution" and "norms that could potentially put these rights at risk."⁷ The need to reform the justice system is urgent and has been shared by many sectors of society, and was one of the main recommendations by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico to the Mexican government in 2003. The goal of the reform is to attack the root cause of the structural deficiencies in the penal justice system, and "should not leave out the State's obligations to comply with international treaties and instruments that are part of international human rights law."⁸

Cases have been documented in Mexico in which, for political more than judicial reasons, innocent people have been falsely accused of "belonging" to "organized crime." The right to due process is recognized as a fundamental right of all people, and should not allow for any form of discrimination. However, in this reform, a certain set of rules would be designed for those people who are accused of belonging to organized crime rings, stripping them of the right to due process.⁹ Organizations have stated that legalizing practices such as detaining someone while conducting an investigation, or carrying out a raid without a judicial order is contradictory given that Mexico already "has the necessary tools to democratically carry out security and judicial activities while respecting human rights." Current problems, such as corruption and inefficiency of state agents, are due to factors that have nothing to do with the Constitution.

The EPR announces new actions

The People's Revolutionary Army (EPR) has found President Felipe Calderon responsible for the disappearance on May 25, 2007 of Edmundo Reyes Amaya and Gabriel Cruz Sanchez, alleged leaders of the EPR. In a recent statement, they warned that "the state along with the large corporations should understand the consequences of the decisions they make."¹⁰

In a press release dated December 3, the guerrilla group announced that it would once again begin military harassment, stating that the federal government has not responded to the EPR's previous warnings in which it demanded the presentation and liberation of Reyes Amaya and Cruz Sanchez. During the months of July and September, the EPR took responsibility for a series of attacks against several installations of the state-run petroleum company PEMEX, causing serious economic damage. The last explosion was on September 10.¹¹

The EPR disqualified the first year of Felipe Calderon's government, criticized the National Supreme Court of Justice, and warned about the complications of the hydroelectric dam, "La Parota" in the state of Guerrero. In addition, it criticized the reform of the Institute for Security and Social Services for State Workers as well as labor and electoral reforms, because they show a "clear tendency of moving to the right, and a legalization of the neoliberal régime." It also denounces the corruption and impunity in all levels of power, given that so many executions related to organized crime (stating that more than 2,500 have been documented) would not occur if there were not a close link between organized crime and the government.

The Secretary of the Interior, Francisco Ramírez Acuña, has stated that he is concerned about the content of this press release, and points out that the government does not know the location of the two disappeared people. "We are carrying out the corresponding investigations throughout the country with all organizations [...] in order to discover their location. This was the commitment we made, and we want to find them in whatever conditions they are in. What is clear is that neither the federal government, the army nor the Federal Attorney General's Office has them, and therefore we should investigate their whereabouts."¹²

- 1 Ambassador Patricia Espinosa goes before the Commission on Foreign Affairs of the House of Representatives, October 31, 2007 <http://www.sre.gob.mx/social/contenido/disc/2007/oct/disc_047.html>.
- 2 La Jornada, November 1, 2007.
- 3 La Jornada, October 4, 2007.
- 4 La Jornada, October 10, 2007.
- 5 El Universal, December 13, 2007.
- 6 Idem.
- 7 Press Release, December 13, 2007 <www.redtdt.org.mx>.
- 8 Idem.
- 9 Idem.
- 10 El Universal, December 3, 2007.
- 11 La Jornada, September 12, 2007.
- 12 La Jornada, December 6, 2007.

Incarceration of social leaders and human rights defenders in Guerrero

Throughout 2007 in Guerrero, social and human rights organizations have denounced a lack of dialogue and attention to conflicts and social demands by the government led by Zeferino Torreblanca Galindo. In many cases the response has been repression and incarceration of social and human rights leaders, thus worsening the conflicts and failing to attend to the root of the problems that are behind the demands¹.

On November 8, 2007, José Manuel Olivares Hernández, director of the "José María Morelos y Pavón" Regional Human Rights Center and well known human rights defender (see previous PBI Mexico Newsletter, number 22, Summer 2007), was documenting police abuses during a protest lead by the Chilapa Citizen's Council in which protesters demanded that the municipal president follow through with public works that she had promised in her campaign. The municipal assistant gave the order to detain Olivares: "detain this jerk that is causing us problems." Olivares Hernández argued that he was only doing his job in defending human rights and that he was not participating in the blockade, to which he got the response that "I don't give a shit."² The protesters were beaten up and 15 of them, along with leader Virginio Vázquez Pileño, were arrested. On November 9, they were released on bail, and although they were all accused of the same crimes (attacks to communication networks, criminal association, and rioting), Olivares Hernández's bail was much higher than that of the other detainees.

On August 9, David Valtierra Arango, leader of Radio Ñomndaa, the indigenous community radio station in the municipality of Xochistlahuaca³, was detained and accused of kidnapping. This accusation came from a decision made in a community assembly in

2004 to detain a farmer that illegally took ownership of land that did not belong to him – there are eight other arrest warrants out for the same crime.⁴ On October 13, Cirino Plácido Valerio, founder and councilman of the Regional Coordination of Community Authorities (Community Police), was detained and accused of kidnapping, abuse of authority, and usurping functions, all of which allegedly were committed in 2005.⁵ These indigenous organizations are branded as criminals for exercising their right to freedom of expression through the use of the radio, and for applying their own system of norms to achieve justice in their communities.

On October 19 Cándido Félix Santiago was arrested and accused of attacking communication networks.⁶ This was his fourth detention this year; he has also been accused of riot and kidnapping. Félix Santiago, leader of the Regional Council for the Development of the Me'Phaa People who speak the Bathaa dialect, has led a series of protests since 2006 to demand the fulfillment of agreements that have already been signed with the Government and the Department of Education of Guerrero (SEG) which would send bilingual teachers to 17 Me'Phaa communities that speak the Bathaa dialect in the Montaña region.

Finally, the last few months have been marked by conflict between students that have graduated from the Rural Teachers School in Ayotzinapa "Raul Isidro Burgos" with the SEG and the governor. A series of protests began in August to demand more teaching positions for the graduates, and that the program for Certification in Primary Education be continued. Finally,

students and the government came to a partial agreement on December 22⁷; these months have been marked by a lack of attention to the demands of the students and strong police repression. On November 14, state riot police evicted, beat, and violently detained protesters that were outside the state Congress; more than 200 were injured.⁸ On November 30, while distributing propaganda on the highway that enters Acapulco, the students were repressed by the Federal Preventative Police - 56 students were detained and one person was seriously injured.⁹

Local organizations have stated that a lack of dialogue has caused the organizations to take actions such as occupying public spaces or blocking highways so that their demands could be heard and attended. As a result, the state has "used this moment to place them outside the law, using public institutions like the State Attorney General's Office to negatively apply the law to social leaders for political motives."¹⁰

- 1 Repression and incarceration as a means of attending to conflicts, Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, Chilapa Citizens Council, Council of Ejidos and Communities Opposed to the La Parota Dam (CECOP), Community Authorities of Carrizalillo, Regional Council for the Development of the Me'Phaa People, José María Morelos y Pavón Regional Human Rights Center, November 12, 2007.
- 2 Urgent Action, National Civil Organizations Network "Todos Los Derechos Para Todos", November 8, 2007.
- 3 PBI Mexico Newsletter, num. 19, September 2006.
- 4 Urgent Action, Tlachinollan, August 10, 2007.
- 5 La Jornada Guerrero, October 14, 2007.
- 6 Press Release, Tlachinollan, October 19, 2007.
- 7 El Sur, December 23, 2007
- 8 Urgent Action, Tlachinollan, November 14, 2007.
- 9 Urgent Action, Tlachinollan, November 30, 2007
- 10 Repression... op. cit.

Nadin Reyes Maldonado, daughter of one of the disappeared people from Oaxaca, talks about her father's disappearance

Edmundo Reyes Amaya was disappeared on May 25th of last year in the city of Oaxaca, together with Gabriel Alberto Cruz Sánchez. At the time of his disappearance, Nadin Reyes Maldonado and her family did not know anything about their father's activities, however that did not stop them from demanding that he be found alive. They point to the federal government and to the Oaxacan government led by Ulises Ruíz as those responsible for his disappearance, saying that the State has not done its job in looking for her father due to the fact that "the State is not interested in resolving this case because they are involved in the disappearance."¹ The Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights has denounced harassment towards the families of the two people who were disappeared, due to supposed ties between them and the People's Revolutionary Army.² Nadin stated that she has been subject to harassment "from federal government authorities. (...) I feel helpless and sad, mainly due to the impunity in which we live.



Nadin Reyes with Tita Radilla from AFADEM on the International Day of the Detained and Disappeared 2007. Photo: PBI.

Besides suffering from the loss of my father, we live in fear that something else could happen to us for beginning to fight back." Nadin has turned into a human rights defender since the disappearance of her father. She states that the work that both she and her family have done has been to defend the rights of her father and Gabriel Alberto Cruz Sánchez "and also the rights of all those people who have gone through the same thing." She explains that an awareness of social problems has always been present in her family and that without a doubt the disappearance of her father "has affected us deeply and has made us even more aware of so many other things, and that is why we are fighting back."

- 1 Interview with Nadin Reyes and PBI, December 2007.
- 2 Urgent Action, Limerddh, September 13, 2007.

Radio Calenda: serving its community



Members of the community radio Radio Calenda. Photo: PBI.

At the request of the World Association of Community Radios (AMARC-México) and the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, PBI accompanied reporters from Radio Calenda while they were reporting in San Antonino Castillo Velasco and the surrounding towns during the elections to State Congress in Oaxaca on August 5, and in the municipal elections on October 7, 2007.

On election day, the reporters for Radio Calenda encouraged their listeners to go out and vote. They were provided with media credentials which helped them receive further recognition among local authorities and political parties. Prior to the accompaniment, PBI undertook an intense work agenda, meeting with authorities on all levels of Mexican government. As a result the accompaniment was carried out without security incidents or threats to any of the Radio staff.

It is important to remember that Oaxaca has a population of 3 million people and is a complex state due to the fact that 418 of the 570 municipalities elect authorities by "uses and customs." In addition, due to social and political violence in the state (an unresolved conflict from last year with the Popular Assembly of the People of Oaxaca, an increase in organized crime, agrarian conflicts, disputes for control of schools between the teachers of the Section 22 and 59, and the EPR's actions related to their demand that their two militants be found), civil organizations and authorities were concerned that the elections might not go smoothly. However, contrary to what was expected, the election day was relatively calm and peaceful. Even so, local media reported different incidents such as persuading voters, buying votes with money or with food, and several acts of violence. The most serious violence included confrontations that ended in gunshot injuries, holding public officials hostage, and

aggressions towards sympathizers of opposition party supporters. There were also many acts of buying, persuading, or convincing votes in some communities and incidents in which some people or public election officials "helped people cast votes," violating their right to secret ballot. Other complaints included that basic food baskets and money in cash (up to 2 thousand pesos per vote) were given to voters. There were several expressions of inconformity, discontent and social mobilization when the election results were released. However, the state government has stated several times that the elections were carried out in a "climate of tranquility and social peace" while at the same time recognizing that there are 29 problem areas, that is, municipalities that are characterized by their high level of political conflict. Among these municipalities is San Antonino Castillo Velasco¹.

The situation of community radios in Mexico

Radio Calenda is a community radio, in other words, a local non-commercial radio station that transmits informative programs of general and cultural interest, directed toward the local municipal population. It is one of the few radios that has these characteristics and that has authorization to transmit from the Department of Communications and Transportation since 2005.

Compared to other countries in Latin America, Mexico has relatively few community radios. Although there are 150 radios in the country with a "free antenna, there are only 12 community stations that have the proper

authorization. Because of this, it is more urgent than ever that the Law [for Radio and Television] include adequate rules so that indigenous and rural communities can easily obtain the proper means of communication." According to Carlos Aparicio, Director of Radiobemba, "wherever there are community radios, there has been better social organization, increased sharing and dialogue amongst the local population, improvements in the community, a debate about the collective memory, and debates about the present and the future of the people."²

Aleida Calleja, representative of Amarc-México, states that community radios have been in existence in Mexico for 30 years, although "with few possibilities of permanence: there have been radios used for literacy in rural areas, which are known as "radio schools" such as in Valle del Mezquital, Hidalgo, as well as radios that talk about political views and democracy, such as Radio Pirata and Televerdad, both of which were short-lived". "Community radio tries to show the diversity and richness of different sectors and social movements, defending democratic legality, providing a focus on specific problems, and acting as an open tribunal for the entire society. In summary, radios are directed toward specific sectors of the population: women, children, farmers, indigenous people, popular organizations, environmentalists, youth, and specific neighborhoods. Their hallmark is non-profit public service."³

According to Emilio Santiago, Director of Radio Calenda, nowadays it is more difficult to gain access to radio frequencies, and the main obstacle to this means of communication continues to be funding. "We hardly receive funding from the government, we can not commercialize our airtime and running the radio incurs high costs: we have to buy and repair equipment, pay the government, rent a place to house the radio, etc. However, despite these difficulties, I am convinced that the role of community radios is fundamental. It acts as an escape valve and as a means in which people can express their inconformity and express their ideas about a wide range of topics."⁴

- 1 Evaluation of Election Day, Political Rights Monitoring Project in Oaxaca, CENCOS, October 9, 2007.
- 2 El Sur, October 29, 2007
- 3 Community Radio: struggles and realities, Aleida Calleja <<http://www.mexicanadecomunicacion.com.mx>>.
- 4 PBI Interview with Emilio Santiago, August 4, 2007

Mexico before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

The Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), together with the Inter-American Court of Human Rights, is one of the institutions of the Organization of American States (OEA) that works for the protection and promotion of human rights. This body came into being as a result of the American Human Rights Convention. Mexico signed the convention in 1981 and accepted the competency of the Court in 1998. Among its functions, the IACHR receives, analyzes and investigates individual petitions that allege human rights violations in countries that belong to the OEA, and has the capacity to emit recommendations to states regarding specific cases. In addition, it can make recommendations that states take specific "precautionary measures" to avoid serious and irreparable damage to human rights defenders in urgent cases.¹ Turning to international bodies is a resource that is used when internal judiciary procedures have been exhausted within the country. Currently there are two cases in the IACHR for human rights violations in the state of Guerrero. The Mexican Army is involved in both of these cases, and both are related to the prevalence of the military judiciary system in Mexico. Cases of human rights violations committed by soldiers against civilians are systematically tried by the military justice system, and not by a civilian justice system, as is indicated in recommendations by international organizations.²

The first case has been in review by the IACHR since 2005 and has to do with forced disappearances during the so-called "Dirty War" in Mexico in the 1970s. The case involves the disappearance of Rosendo Radilla Pacheco, detained by the military and disappeared in August 1974 in the municipality of Atoyac. His case passed from the civil justice system to the military justice system in Mexico.³ Rosendo Radilla's daughter, Tita Radilla Martinez, vicepresident of the Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Mexico (AFADEM) has received PBI accompaniment since 2003 and has been working to attain justice in this case for several years.⁴ AFADEM is working on more than one hundred cases of forced disappearances, of which Rosendo Radilla's is one of the best documented.

With the creation of the Special Prosecutor for Social and Political Movements of the Past (Femospp) during Vicente Fox's presidency, there was a lot of hope that crimes committed during the Dirty War would be solved. However, the Femospp was closed in the beginning of 2007 and many organizations agreed that the right to truth and justice is still far from being achieved.⁵ In August the IACHR sent a recommendation to the Mexican government in which it found the government



Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, Inés Fernandez Ortega and Fortunato Prisciliano Sierra with a PBI volunteer. Photo: PBI.

responsible for Radilla's disappearance, and gave the government until November 15 to follow through with the recommendations that include an investigation into what really happened and finding those who are responsible for the crimes. According to Maria Sirvent, lawyer from the Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights who has worked on this case, "the Special Prosecutor recognized that there was a systematic and generalized practice in which Radilla was tortured; his location is still unknown."⁶ The Mexican government should publicly recognize their responsibility for these human rights violations and create a commission to pay damages, which would benefit the family members.⁷

The second case before the IACHR is that of the alleged rape of Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú, indigenous Me'phaa women, by Mexican soldiers in 2002. These cases were also passed from the civil justice system to the military justice system and until this day the soldiers have still not been tried.⁸ In a hearing on October 12 in Washington D.C., IACHR President Florentín Meléndez, expressed strong concern about these cases and asked why "the military jurisdiction [is still applied] in cases in which serious human rights violations occur against people who are not subject to the military justice system. This is contrary to the Mexican Constitution and jurisprudence of the National Supreme Court of Justice".⁹

According to Ines and Valentina's lawyer from the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, Mario Patron Sanchez, the military's investigation has been very slow and they have done very little work on the case. During these five and a half years they have lost evidence, such as seminal fluid that was found in the victims.¹⁰ He compared the case to that of the soldiers that entered El Pérsico, a bar in Castaños, Coahuila, in July 2006, and proceeded to rape 14 sex workers. In this case the soldiers were found guilty, although not all were given the same sentence. According to Mario Patrón, the difference between Ines and Valentina's case and the case in Coahuila is that the case was presented before

a civil judge, and not the military justice system. The Mexican government's response was that "in Castaños the soldiers acted outside of service, and as a result they were allowed to be judged in a civilian court. In Ayutla they were in service when the events occurred and as a result are being tried by a military judge."¹¹

In the Castaños case and in other more recent cases related to Army operations in the fight against drugtrafficking, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) emitted several recommendations to the Department of National Defense (37, 38, 39 and 40/2007). The president of the CNDH has stated that he hopes that the "Executive assumes its responsibility and orders that the soldiers be punished."¹² Several organizations have stated that there is a certain inconsistency in the CNDH's recommendations - it fails to make statements about certain cases and in other cases the recommendations do not say anything about the need for crimes committed by soldiers against civilians to be judged in a civilian court¹³.

In defending these cases, the victims and the human rights defenders have suffered from different types of harassment and threats. Obtilia Eugenio Manuel of the Organization of Indigenous Me'Phaa People received a death threat in 2005. Weeks before the hearing in October in which Ines and Valentina gave their testimony, Ines's husband Fortunato Prisciliano Sierra was assaulted and threatened: "what you are denouncing with your wife Ines against the guachos [military] is a lie, and we know that you are planning on going to the United States." The IACHR emitted precautionary measures for the protection of Fortunato and his family on September 4¹⁴.

In both cases, if the Mexican government does not comply with the IACHR's recommendations, the cases could be heard before the Inter-American Court, a body whose jurisdiction and possible ruling would be have to be respected.

- 1 IACHR: <www.cidh.oas.org>.
- 2 Diagnosis of the Situation of Human Rights in Mexico, HCHR, December 2003.
- 3 Proceso, October 21, 2007.
- 4 PBI Mexico Newsletter, num. 20, Winter 2007.
- 5 Joint report Afadem, Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, Red TdT, Prodh and others: Clarification and sanctioning of crimes of the past during the presidency 2000-2006: broken commitments and delayed justice, September 28, 2006.
- 6 Proceso, October 21, 2007.
- 7 Ibid.
- 8 La Jornada Guerrero, October 18, 2007.
- 9 Proceso, October 21, 2007.
- 10 La Jornada, October 18, 2007.
- 11 Idem.
- 12 La Jornada, September 22, 2007.
- 13 La Jornada, September 23, 2007.
- 14 Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, Press Release, September 5, 2007

PBI ACCOMPANIES THE TLACHINOLLAN HUMAN RIGHTS CENTER WHILE WORKING ON THE LA PAROTA CASE

At the request of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, the PBI Mexico team is providing international accompaniment to the Tlachinollan staff while they work on the La Parota case, a proposed hydroelectric dam that has caused one of the most significant social conflicts in Guerrero since 2003.¹ The accompaniment was motivated by the high level of conflict surrounding the case and the harassment to which Tlachinollan has been subjected. PBI has accompanied Tlachinollan in several other cases since December 2003.

Since November 2005, Tlachinollan's team of lawyers has provided legal advice to the Council of Ejidos² and Communities Opposed to the La Parota Dam (CECOP). Thanks to Tlachinollan, those who are opposed to the dam have had access to legal assistance in the Agrarian Tribunal, which has allowed them to annul community assemblies in which the landowners had agreed to the expropriation of their lands.³ Those in favor of the project have made negative statements in the press about Tlachinollan as a result of their work relating to the case. PBI's first accompaniment was in the informative assembly on August 12 in Agua Caliente, which forms part of the farming settlement of Cacahuatpec. This assembly was regulated by "uses and customs" and more than 3,000 attendees unanimously declared that they wanted the plans to build the hydroelectric dam canceled, even after the Federal Electricity Commission (CFE) explained the "benefits" that the dam would bring. Four experts also informed the farmers about the dangers of the project.⁴

Governor of Guerrero Zeferino Torreblanca has asked the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico to carry out a direct consultation amongst the affected population about accepting or rejecting the La Parota dam.⁵ Secretary of Energy Georgina Kessel Martínez has stated that Felipe Calderon's government will continue to promote the La



Informative Assembly about the La Parota Project. Photo: PBI

Parota dam, even though the project has been delayed by the annulled assemblies in the Agrarian Tribunal.⁶ CFE director Elias Ayub has stated that they won a court trial allowing them to begin work on the dam, but specified "we are convinced that we have to come to an agreement with the landowners, independent of the order. We need a voluntary agreement so that the construction can begin."⁷ The CFE has already begun construction on the Yesca dam in Oaxaca, and this means that "we already have a hydroelectric dam in the process of being built, which gives us time to begin La Parota."

The spokesmen and lawyers for the CECOP have denied Elias Ayub's statements about the dam, given that the CFE has not won any of the litigation that would allow

them to begin work on the dam. According to Tlachinollan lawyer Vidulfo Rosales Sierra, "Elias Ayub and Torreblanca Galindo's declarations reflect the deliberate intention to reactivate the conflict" and "indicate that the federal and state government are trying to reposition themselves in the public opinion in order to impose the dam."⁸

1 Please see PBI Mexico Newsletter num. 17, March 2006.

2 An "ejido" is a cooperative farming community.

3 Agrarian Tribunal invalidates assembly in favor of La Parota, CIMAC, June 7, 2007 <www.cimacnoticias.com>.

4 Press Release Tlachinollan "Unanimous rejection of La

5 Parota in the nucleus of Cacahuatpec"

El Sur, November 29, 2007.

6 El Sur, December 2, 2007.

7 El Universal, 28 de noviembre de 2007.

8 El Sur, November 29, 2007.

PBI's serious concern for the security of the people we accompany

In PBI Mexico's last newsletter (num. 22, Summer 2007) we published information about a threat and harassment towards the Cerezo Committee during June 2007. Since then, the level of risk for Emiliana, Francisco and Alejandro Cerezo Contreras, human rights defenders who have received PBI accompaniment since 2002, has significantly increased. Since June, the Committee has received four e-mail death threats, and has registered several security incidents and harassment: anonymous phone calls, surveillance, etc¹. In addition, this year thirty articles have been published that make reference to a supposed relationship between the Cerezo Committee and armed groups. The last few threats that were received in September were also sent to journalists, who published the threats and made reference to these supposed links. The Cerezo Committee considers these events to be part of a serious defamation campaign against them. In this context, on December 12, Melanie del Carmen Salgado Lopez, member of the Cerezo Committee, was attacked while she was walking to her house. An unknown subject pushed her against a wall,

grabbed her hair and slammed her head against the wall, causing a lesion on the right side of her face. At the same time he told her "don't play the idiot."² On that same day Melanie, accompanied by Francisco Cerezo, had gone to the Mexico City District Attorney General's Office to hand in her complaint about the decision not to "exercise legal action" regarding the investigation of the death threats that Melanie received in May 2006 (see PBI Mexico Newsletter number 18, June 2006).³

PBI is also concerned for the security of the members of the Organization of Women Ecologists of the Sierra de Petatlan (OMESP), accompanied by PBI since September 2005. In the last few months, members of the organization have been victims of several attacks: on September 12, 2007 Felipe Arreaga, advisor to the OMESSP, was traveling on his all terrain vehicle (ATV) to Petatlan when he heard an explosion in the exhaust pipe. On September 14, there was a second explosion and the mechanic discovered that there was sugar in the engine. On September 17 at 4:30 a.m. two unknown men entered

Celsa Valdovinos Rios, OMESSP president, and Felipe Arreaga's house and stole their ATV. The Tlachinollan Human Rights Center considers this act to be deplorable, given that two years after the liberation of Felipe Arreaga Sánchez, attacks and harassment against the environmentalists continue. It is clear that "they do not have the conditions to carry out their work without risk to their life, security and integrity."⁴ The German Human Rights Coordination has stated that these events have been "attacks committed with the intention of putting their work and the members of the OMESSP at risk. [...] The attacks are a continuation of the harassment and persecution towards local human rights environmental defenders."⁵ These events were denounced at the Petatlan Attorney General's Office.

1 Preventive Action, Cerezo Committee October 22, 2007

2 Urgent Action, Cerezo Committee, December 12, 2007

3 Urgent Action, Limesddh, May 10, 2006.

4 Urgent Action, Tlachinollan, September 19, 2007

5 Press release from the German Human Rights Coordination, September 24, 2007.

The Team's work in Mexico

Accompaniments:

- Emiliana, Francisco and Alejandro Cerezo Contreras, members of the Cerezo Committee throughout the Federal District and on their trips to visit their imprisoned brothers.
- Otilia Eugenio Manuel, Andrea Eugenio Manuel and Cuauhtémoc Ramírez Rodríguez, leaders of the Organization of the Indigenous Me'Phaa People (OPIM), in the municipality of Ayutla, Guerrero and in their activities throughout Guerrero.
- Tlachinollan Human Rights Center: staff of the Ayutla Office; staff of the Tlapa office in their work on the cases of Sócrates Tolentino González Genaro and La Parota
- Tita Radilla Martínez, vice-president of the Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Mexico (AFADEM), in the municipality of Atoyac, Guerrero and in her activities throughout Guerrero and Mexico City.
- Celsa Valdovinos Ríos and Felipe Arreaga, leaders of the Organization of Women Ecologists of the Sierra de Petatlán(OMESP), in the municipality of Petatlán and in their activities throughout the state of Guerrero.
- Members of Radio Calenda, community radio from San Antonino Castillo Velasco, Oaxaca, during the municipal elections in October 2007

Public Relations

Interviews with Mexican Authorities

Federal Level. National Attorney General's Office:

Abelardo Antonio Esteva, General Coordinator of Investigation; Ricardo Trejo Serrano, General Director of Penal Processes; Edgar Salcedo Ortega, General Director of Attention to Citizens and Interinstitutional Networks; Manuel Soberanes Díez, Director of Attention to Citizens; José Martín Godoy Castro, Federal Representative in Guerrero. **Department of Public Security:** José Luis Lagunes Lopéz, Under Secretary for the Federal Penitentiary System; Enrique Montiel Valencia, General Inspector for the 20th Region (Oaxaca) for the Federal Preventative Police (PPF); Genaro Barreto Martínez, Regional Commander (Guerrero) for the PFP. **Federal Electricity Commission:** Eugenio Laris Analis, Director of Investment Projects. **Senate:** Senator Salomón Jara Cruz.

Federal District. Human Rights Commission for the

Federal District: Marco Vinicio Gallardo Enriquez, Under Secretary for Institutional Development.

State of Guerrero. Department of the Interior:

Nelson Bello Solís, Under Secretary for Judicial Affairs and Human Rights; Juan San Román Ortíz, Director; Rubén Aguirre Ponce, Institutional Coordinator with Social Organizations; Victor Hugo Méndez Salgado, Director of Tracking, Control and Evaluation in Human Rights Matters. **Department of Public Security and Civil Protection:** General Juan Heriberto Salinas Altés, Secretary; Gregorio Ventura Huerta, Advisor in Judicial Affairs and Human Rights. **Attorney General's Office for the State of Guerrero:** Eduardo Murueta Urrutia, Attorney General; Manuel Saavedra Flores, Special Prosecutor for Human Rights. **State Congress:** Rep. Arturo Álvarez Angli, President of the Special Commission on La Parota; Rossana Mora Patiño, President of the Commission on Human Rights.

State Commission for the Defense of Human Rights:

Hipólito Lugo Cortés, General Examiner; Adelaido Memije Martínez, Executive Secretary; Regional Representatives from the Costa Grande, Costa Chica, Montaña, Acapulco, Tierra Caliente and Norte. Municipalities. **Xochistlahuaca:** Emiliano Apóstol Cruz, Municipal Official; Aniseto Carvajal Barragán, Director of Public Security. Artemio Aguirre Martínez, Secretary to the Mayor. **Acapulco:** Leonor Inzunza Ramírez, Secretary to the City Coordinator for Internal Affairs, Justice, Public Security, Police, and Government.

State of Oaxaca. State Commission on Human

Rights: Jaime Mario Pérez Jiménez, President. **State Electoral Institute:** Filiberto Chávez, Director of Training. **State Attorney General's Office:** Commander Daniel Camarena Flores, Director of the Ministerial Police. Department of the Interior: Manuel García Corpus, Secretary; Rosario Villalobos Rueda, Under Secretary for Human Rights; Ramiro Gutiérrez and Marcos Rosales, Assistant Secretaries to the Governor. **Congress:** Rep. Carlos Alberto Morenos Alcántara, President of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights; Héctor Sánchez López, Technical Secretary of the Special Commission on State Reforms. **Municipalities. San Antonino Castillo Velasco:** Meinardo Joel López Sánchez, Municipal President. **Ocotlán de Morelos:** Andrés Sergio Mariscal Aguilar, Municipal President; Marco Antonio Velasco, Municipal Secretary; Prudencio Cabrera Román, Commander of the Municipal Police.

Companies:

Salvador García, General Director of Luismin.

Interviews with Embassies and International Entities:

Arturo Rodríguez Tonelli, Coordinator for Human Rights Cooperation and Administration of Justice for the European Commission in Mexico; Amerigo Incalcaterra,

Representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico; Celia Aguliar, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM); Delegation of German Members of Parliament in a visit to Mexico.

Interviews with non-governmental organizations, academics and the church:

Federal District: Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights; Serapaz; Mexican League for the Defense of Human Rights(Limeddh); World Association of Community Radios (AMARC-México); "Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez" Human Rights Center; National Association of Companies that Commercialization Rural Products (ANEC); FUNDAR Center for Analysis and Investigation; Institute for Security and Democracy (INSYDE); National Civil Organizations Network "Todos Los Derechos Para Todos"; General José Francisco Gallardo Rodríguez; Juan Antonio Vega. Guerrero: Network of Environmental Organizations of Zihuatanejo (ROGAZ); SOS Bahía; Collective against Torture and Impunity (CCTI); Guerrero Human Rights Network; Regional Coordination of Community Authorities; Assembly of Landowners of Carrizalillo; Monseñor Alejo Zavala, Bishop for Chilpancingo and Chilapa. Oaxaca: Services for an Alternative Education (EDUCA), Center for Indigenous Rights "Flor y Canto"; Casa Chapulín Collective, Radio Calenda. International: Fund for Global Human Rights; SIPAZ; Witness for Peace; Peace Watch; Carea.

Attendance at forums:

Federal District: Social Movements and Pedagogic Heresies in Guerrero, Autonomous University of Mexico City and Unisur; SPP, Plan Mexico and national sovereignty, Casa Lamm; Visit by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights to assess Imprisoned people in Mexico. **Oaxaca:** Personal Freedom and Defending Human Rights, Benito Juárez Autonomous University and the Oaxaca Human Rights Network.

PBI Mexico's U.S. speaking tour

Throughout the month of September, Jamie Wick, two-year field volunteer for the PBI Mexico Project, together with Liza Smith, volunteer with the Colombia Project for the last year and a half, met up in Washington D.C. where, together with the PBI-USA country group, they began a speaking tour on behalf of PBI, as a continuation of the work that they did in Mexico and Colombia. During this U.S. speaking tour they spread information about PBI's work with politicians, students, and the general public. Jamie Wick's tour was made possible thanks to funding from the Fund for Non-Violence, and is one of the activities that PBI encourages volunteers to participate in when they return to their country of origin. This tour is the most recent in a series of tours by PBI Mexico volunteers in the U.S. In Washington, D.C. Jamie and Liza met with government workers in the State Department and with Senators and Representatives from their home states and other states that have supported PBI, many of whom have a strong interest in Latin America. In Washington they were able to participate in a Human Rights First event (HRF) in which Berenice Celeyta (Nomadesc) was present; she had participated a few days before in the Human Rights Defenders Policy Forum "Faith and Freedom: Protecting Human Rights as a Common Cause" in Atlanta, which was organized by HRF and the Carter Center. After Washington D.C. Liza and Jamie continued on to Baltimore, Philadelphia and New York where they presented PBI's work at universities, high schools, bookstores, cafes, churches, Quaker houses and other public spaces. In the universities and the schools, Liza and Jamie gave presentations in Peace Studies classes, Latin American studies classes, and at law schools, in which they presented PBI's method of non-violent accompaniment as a way to transform conflicts. The theory behind international accompaniment sparked much interest amongst the students. In other spaces, they integrated Liza's music, who performed several songs that were strongly inspired by her experience with PBI in Colombia. Liza continued the tour to the West coast while Jamie ended in New York and returned to Mexico to continue working with PBI in the Mexico City office.



Peace Brigades International

PBI is a non-governmental organization that, upon request, maintains international accompaniment teams in conflict areas. The organization's objective is the protection of the political space for individuals and organizations that promote human rights and which, in turn, are under threat of persecution and repression as a consequence of their work. International accompaniment is in this way a conflict transformation tool, through which third parties can contribute in creating the conditions necessary to resolve a conflict peacefully. At no time does PBI attempt to replace Mexican initiatives that promote the respect for human rights, but rather limits itself to supporting such initiatives with the presence of international accompaniment volunteers. To achieve this goal, PBI teams work in-country accompanying those people or organizations under threat, making periodic visits to conflict zones, distributing information on the conflict's development and maintainin

a dialogue with civil and military authorities in an effort to raise international awareness.

PBI Mexico Team: Jamie Wick (United States), Miranda Zagone (Italy), Michael Tambyln (Australia), Maria Gabriela Daza (Colombia), Marielle Tonossi (Switzerland), Sergi Sendra (Spanish State), Françoise Greve (Germany) and Billy Kyte (England).

The PBI Mexico Project Information Bulletin

is a quarterly publication produced by the team in Mexico. PBI maintains the highest level of objectivity possible thanks to the use of a wide variety of public sources (newspapers, magazines, public reports from civil organizations, etc.), and the citation of all sources used in its articles. The newsletter is distributed both within Mexico and internationally. If you would like to receive the PBI Mexico Project's Information Bulletin, please contact the Project Office in San Francisco or the PBI Team in Mexico.

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