



abriendo espacios para la paz

BRIGADAS
INTERNACIONALES DE PAZ
PROYECTO MÉXICO

Peace Brigades International – Mexico Project
MAINTAINING OUR COMMITMENT
ANNUAL REVIEW 2010

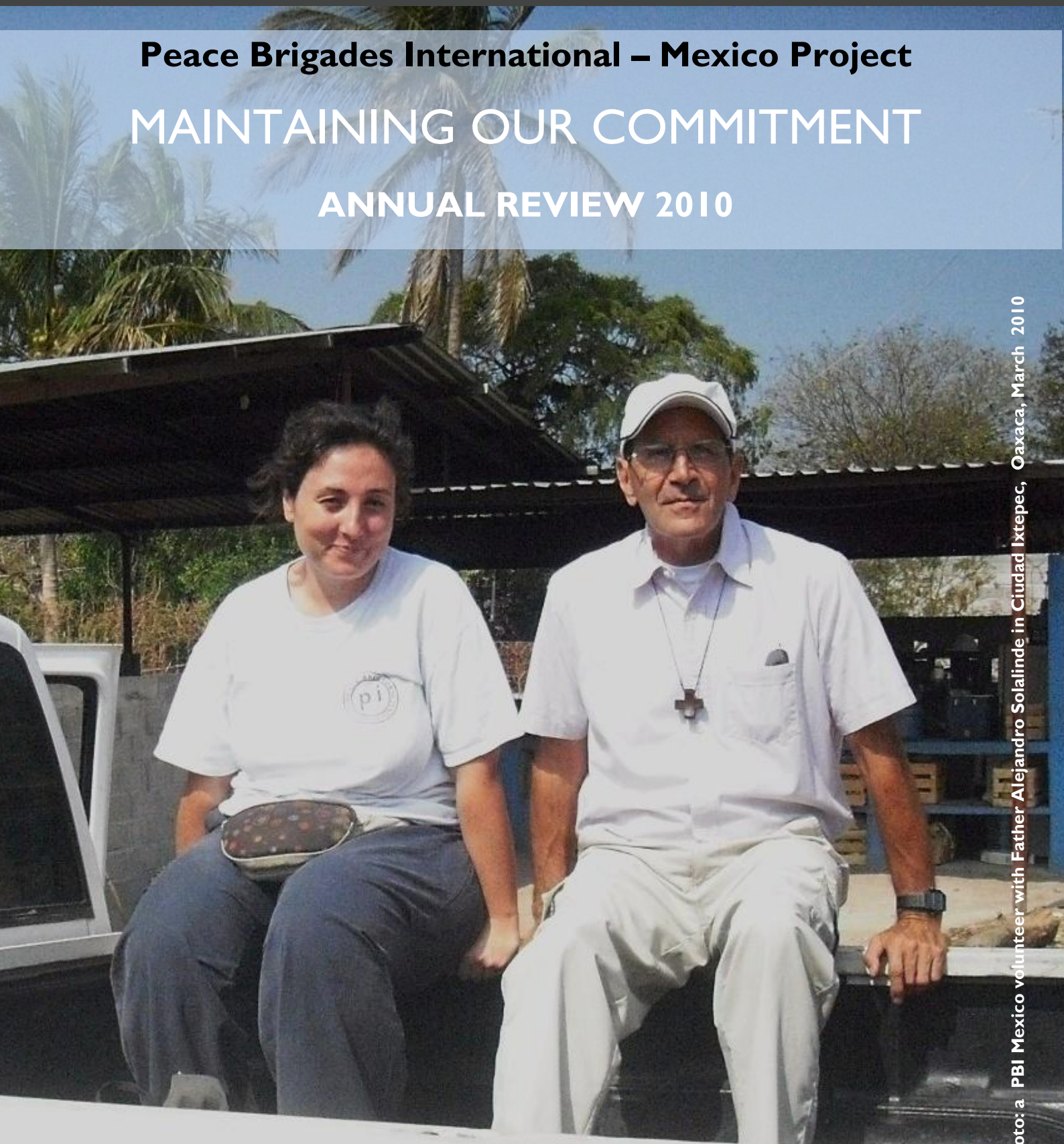


Photo: a PBI Mexico volunteer with Father Alejandro Solalinde in Ciudad Ixtepec, Oaxaca, March 2010

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PBI's objectives in Mexico:

Peace Brigades International's main objective is to contribute to improving the human rights situation in Mexico and to foster social change in areas facing conflict and repression. We aim to do this by guaranteeing that space to act is maintained and increased for those who demand and promote human rights. Since we started work in 1999, we have achieved very significant progress in increasing the space available for civil society initiatives whose aim is to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights in Mexico. Underpinning the permanent presence and activities of PBI's international accompaniers, and the advocacy work undertaken here and abroad, our specific objectives are that:

- Human rights defenders have the necessary space to act to carry out their legitimate activities, without fear of reprisal or violence;
- The international community understand both the local and national human rights initiatives to effectively implement human rights and the difficulties and dangerous situation in which they work. To address this situation PBI has established an international support network that by means of political dialogues, letters, expert briefings, public event, visits and other methods, expresses concern for the dangerous situation faced by Mexican defenders, calling on the Mexican State to comply with its international human rights obligations.
- The different levels of the Mexican State are aware of the issues formulated by local and national human rights initiatives, are informed of the aggressions suffered by human rights defenders and are committed to formulating and applying protective policies, tools and specific mechanisms for at risk human rights defenders;
- Mexican organisations are strengthened and empowered to ensure their own security and carry out their work, thanks to the transmission of techniques and tools that reinforce the safety of their staff and volunteers;
- Mexican organisations are connected with organisations and collectives abroad to share experiences, create networks and establish mutual support mechanisms in the defence and promotion of human rights. For example, lawyers' networks in different countries support the work of Mexican human right lawyers by providing amicus briefs, expert reports, legal aid, and advocacy campaigns and by attending strategic moments of paradigmatic trials and Mexican lawyers' places of work.

The importance of our commitment

In 1998, PBI's General Assembly approved the establishment of the Mexico Project. Only two years later the PAN won the presidential elections for the first time after 71 years of PRI rule, and people spoke of Mexico finally reaching maturity. At the time, some people wondered if PBI weren't coming to Mexico too late; it seemed that we would be witnesses of change rather than participants in it. During the first three years of Vicente Fox's six-year presidential term, there was clearly a change in attitude towards human rights, which culminated in the 2003 launch of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights' (OHCHR) *Diagnóstico sobre la situación de los derechos humanos en México* [National diagnostic study of the human rights situation in Mexico]. It was the first document to present, in comprehensive detail, the human rights issues facing Mexico – but not one chapter was dedicated to the situation of human rights defenders (HRDs).

It was not until 2009 that the OHCHR drafted a specific report on the situation of human rights defenders in Mexico. Noteworthy in the 2010 update to the report are the concerns the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders expressed at the international trend that sees people acting individually or in groups, in collusion with or independent of the State, participate in attacks against human rights defenders. Guerrilla groups, private militias, vigilante and armed groups have been implicated in acts of violence against HRDs, such as beatings, murders and various acts of intimidation.

The war against drugs initiated by the Felipe Calderón's administration at the end of 2006 has not contributed towards halting this trend. As the OHCHR pointed out, in the current context of violence and insecurity which trouble the country, it is essential that

the Mexican State – in compliance with its duty to protect – provide adequate guarantees for the men and women human rights defenders who are at risk as a result of their work. The right to defend human rights implies not only that the State refrains from interfering with or restricting the legitimate activities of defenders, but also that it establishes the legislative, administrative and judicial measures necessary to stop other actors from limiting the right to defend human rights.

Since 2000, PBI has worked in the Mexican state of Guerrero, a state particularly marked by violence and militarization. During this time PBI accumulated firsthand experience and observation of attacks and crimes against human rights defenders. In our report "Men and Women Human Rights Defenders in the state of Guerrero" published in 2007, PBI reflected on the factors that determine the background to the human rights violations against defenders and the reactions and inability of the State to change the situation. In 2008 we established a permanent team in Oaxaca, to respond to the accompaniment requests of human rights defenders in a state with a history of violence and attacks on defenders both in the capital and other areas that are troubled by community conflicts, *caciquismo* [repression by local political bosses] and poverty.

Since 2010, PBI has been monitoring the establishment of a governmental protection mechanism, and has participated as an external consultant in the meetings that the Civil Society Organisation Group (the CSO Group) has held to promote the issue. In addition, PBI has offered a risk-analysis methodology to Mexican authorities, which is fundamental when implementing appropriate protection measures specially adapted to the needs of each defender who requests support. In May 2010, PBI provided the federal authorities with this methodology, a

contribution it hopes to repeat and broaden in the future.

PBI's presence in Mexico has had to adapt itself to changing events and needs of Mexican civil society. After more than 10 years, we can say that, in some areas, we have completed our mission and that our work is complete. At the same time, new challenges and topics come to light that will require new protection strategies and creative ways of supporting civil society processes seeking a future where human rights are fostered and respected.

Background to Mexican HRDs' work

Two hundred years after the Cry of Independence, and 100 years after the Revolution, Mexico has received strong criticism by the international community, largely related to President Calderón's war against drug trafficking and the subsequent militarisation of the country. According to some estimates, the extreme violence has taken the lives of over 30,000 people since the start of the president's term of office at the end of 2006. Calderón's policy has led to the US government taking an increasingly critical position with regard to Mexico's security strategy, and its increased promotion of US forces' intervention. In September 2010, President Obama's government announced the withholding of US \$26 million, unless Mexico complies with the rulings issued by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights that year.

As a result of the growing militarisation, Amnesty International has registered an increase in serious human rights violations perpetrated by army personnel who are conducting police activities. In its March 2010 session, the United Nations Human Rights Committee formulated important recommendations in regard to changing the

military legal code so that the military legal system does not have jurisdiction in cases of human rights violations, and to eliminate *arraigo* (a form of pre-charge detention) from civilian legislation and practice.

The UN Committee strongly questioned Mexico's implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and requested immediate measures to guarantee the investigation of all cases of serious human rights violations, be they crimes committed in the Dirty War or current attacks against human rights defenders or journalists. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico (OHCHR) pointed out in November 2010 that the number of attacks against HRDs continues to increase, and that 91% of the human rights violations which have been reported remain in impunity. Since the OHCHR's last report, published in October 2009, it registered 37 new acts of aggression between September 2009 and October 2010. The Office also highlighted the fact that five human rights defenders had lost their lives in that same period.

The violence against migrants in transit through Mexican territory was named by the National Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CNDH) as one of Mexico's most worrying issues because of the high number of cases of violations of migrants' rights. These include mass murders and kidnappings, as in the case of 72 Central American migrants killed in the state of Tamaulipas. Amnesty International has termed the trip from Central America to the United States as 'the most dangerous journey in the world'. The CNDH also recognised the high levels of risk and vulnerability faced by defenders of migrants' rights in issuing nine precautionary measures in favour of migrants' rights defenders in 2010.

Two Mexican groups of migrants' rights defenders have also received precautionary

measures from the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). In 2010, the IACHR granted a total of nine precautionary measures to at-risk Mexican defenders. This significant increase – compared with the two precautionary measures granted in 2009 – highlights the urgency and importance of ensuring the protection of human rights defenders who currently face a situation of extreme violence and insecurity.

Evolution of our accompaniments in 2010

In **Guerrero**, certain cases have shown positive developments, as shown by the August 2010 judgements of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights in favour of Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo. The rulings order the Mexican State to conduct effective investigations in civilian tribunals into the human rights violations the two women suffered at the hands of army personnel. In addition, the Court orders that Mexican legislation be reformed to abolish the use of the military justice system in cases of human rights violations against civilians. The Court repeated this same point in December 2010, when it ruled in favour of Teodoro Montiel and Rodolfo Cabrera, two environmental and campesino defenders from Guerrero who were also tortured by the army. The 2010 judgements therefore follow the same vein as the historic 2009 ruling in favour of the family of Rosendo Radilla – the first by an international tribunal to order the Mexican State to remedy the human rights violations perpetrated by army personnel against civilians.

As part of PBI's protection strategy, in 2010 we worked to see that the judgements in favour of the women we accompany – Inés Fernández, Valentina Rosendo and Tita Radilla – are implemented; we presented information

to the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers; conducted advocacy in favour of legislative reform with our support networks in Mexico and abroad (including lawyers' networks); and published a special bulletin in October 2010 entitled *Mexico Before the Inter-American Court*. It was also very important that we accompanied these women during their hearings before the Inter-American Court in Peru and Costa Rica, and during meetings between the women and the State to negotiate compliance with the judgement. PBI considers that our work of accompaniment and advocacy in 2011 should be ongoing, to ensure that Inés, Valentina and Tita can continue to demand justice.



Activists relatives of OPIM defenders detained in Ayutla prison reading a PBI's bulletin "Silenced", Ayutla, Guerrero, August 2009. Photo: PBI.

Another positive turn of events occurred in a case which had been dragging on since 2008, with the criminalisation of 15 members of the Organisation of the Me'phaa Indigenous People (OPIM). In February 2010, four activists were released after being declared innocent; the fifth, Raúl Hernández, remained in prison until August, when he was finally absolved of the murder he had been unjustly accused of. Likewise, in the course of 2010 the detention orders against another 10 OPIM members – including the organisation's president, Cuauhtémoc Ramírez – were cancelled. PBI had presented information on these activists to the international community,

and to UN and OAS representatives, who had expressed their concern at the criminalisation of these human rights defenders.



Vidulfo Rosales, Tlachinollan lawyer, and Raúl Hernández of OPIM, at the prison exit in Ayutla, Guerrero, in August 2010, Photo: PBI

On the other hand, threats and acts of aggression suffered by the people we accompany, and particularly members of the OPIM, continued during 2010. On several occasions, attacks and threats were made against Inés Fernández and her family, and against Raúl Hernández once he was released from prison. For Cuauhtémoc Ramírez and his partner Obtilia Eugenio, the situation became intolerable and they were forced to leave Guerrero for their own safety. In December 2010, however, they found another written threat hung on the door of their new home. Likewise, Valentina Rosendo was forced to leave the state for her safety and that of her daughter.

In **Oaxaca** there was also good news in early 2010, with the release of Juan Manuel Martínez Moreno. He had been imprisoned in 2009, unjustly accused of the murder of Brad Will during Oaxaca's political crisis in 2006.

However, Mr Martínez's lawyer Alba Cruz, herself accompanied by PBI since 2009, has been subjected to a systematic series of attacks and threats that have sometimes forced her to leave Oaxaca City for her own safety. Threats to her mobile phone have even reached Alba Cruz during her PBI-organised European tour in April-May 2010.

In April 2010, an armed attack against a caravan bringing humanitarian aid to San Juan Copala, a Triqui indigenous community involved in an extremely violent internal conflict, caused the deaths of Bety Cariño, a widely respected human rights defender, and Jyry Jaakkola, a Finnish observer. The attack shook Mexico and the international community, highlighting the complex, unstable situation experienced in certain parts of Oaxaca. PBI conducted a thorough analysis of the conflict in San Juan Copala, and we provide accompaniment to two organizations, the CEDHAPI and Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño Human Rights Centre (BARCA-DH) who requested the CIDH to issue precautionary measures for 135 people displaced by the conflict. The CIDH issued the measures at the end of 2010. Both organizations have followed up on the implementation of the measures by the state and federal authorities.

In the second half of 2010, thanks to strengthening of the PBI Oaxaca team, we have been able to accept two new requests for accompaniment: one for Father Alejandro Solalinde and his colleagues at the 'Hermanos en el Camino' Migrant Shelter, and one for the members of BARCA-DH. Both groups recognise the efficacy of PBI's protective accompaniment, and both face situations of serious risk related to their legitimate work in defence of human rights.



PBI volunteers with Father Uvi from BARCA-DH, October 2010. Photo: PBI

With a new Oaxacan governor starting his mandate in December 2010, civil society organisations hope to open a new space for dialogue around the resolution of conflicts and demands for justice related to the 2006 conflict in Oaxaca.

In **Mexico City**, members of the Cerezo Committee (like Alba Cruz) were victims of harassment while on tour in Europe. However, we believe that despite their current security situation, the Cerezo Committee is one of the organisations that has most flourished in recent years, thanks in part to the space to act provided by PBI's accompaniment. During 2010, some Committee members formed a new organisation called Urgent Action for Human Rights Defenders (Acción Urgente para los Defensores de los Derechos Humanos, ACUDDEH), which provides security advice and training for human rights defenders in Mexico. This organisation's work is complementary to that of PBI.

Individuals and organisations accompanied in 2010

- ❖ Cerezo Committee (Comité Cerezo), Mexico City.
- ❖ Tita Radilla, of the Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (Asociación de Familiares de Detenidos, Desaparecidos y Víctimas de Violaciones a los Derechos Humanos en México, AFADEM), Atoyac de Álvarez, Guerrero.
- ❖ 'Tlachinollan' Human Rights Centre of the Montaña (Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña 'Tlachinollan'), Tlapa de Comonfort, Guerrero.
- ❖ Organisation of the Me'phaa Indigenous People (Organización del Pueblo Indígena Me'phaa, OPIM), Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero.
- ❖ Celsa Valdovinos, of the Women's Environmentalist Organisation of the Sierra of Petatlán (Organización de Mujeres Ecologistas de la Sierra de Petatlán, OMESP), Petatlán, Guerrero
- ❖ Civil Monitor of the Police and Public Security Forces of the Montaña of Guerrero (Monitor Civil de la Policía y Cuerpos de Seguridad Pública Seguridad en la Montaña de Guerrero, MOCIPOL), Tlapa de Comonfort, Guerrero
- ❖ Valentina Rosendo Cantú
- ❖ 25 November Liberation Committee (Comité de Liberación 25 de Noviembre), Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca
- ❖ Human Rights and Advice Centre for Indigenous Peoples (Centro de Derechos Humanos y Asesoría a los Pueblos Indígenas, CEDHAPI), Tlaxiaco, Oaxaca
- ❖ Father Alejandro Solalinde and the staff of the 'Hermanos en el Camino' Migrant Shelter (Albergue del Migrante 'Hermanos en el Camino'), Ciudad Ixtepec, Oaxaca
- ❖ 'Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño' Regional Human Rights Centre (Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos 'Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño', BARCA-DH), Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca.

Women Human Rights Defenders: Changemakers

In December 2010, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya, for the first time focused her report on women HRDs, claiming '[t]he rights of women to participate in public life, including through the promotion and protection of human rights'.¹ PBI Mexico works from a gender perspective, recognising the greater vulnerability of women not only as rightsholders but as human rights defenders. PBI also works to promote the participation of women in this field, both directly, by accompanying women human rights defenders, and indirectly, by reinforcing the visibility of women defenders' work as members of their organisations and communities. Six of the nine organisations accompanied by PBI Mexico are led by women.

The UN Special Rapporteur stated that 'the violations faced by women defenders may themselves take a gender-specific form'² and underlines the fact that women human rights defenders in the Americas are exposed to risk particularly marked by 'death threats, physical attacks, killings and attempted killings'.³ More than half of the communications received by the Special Rapporteur about threats were related to HRDs working in the Americas; Colombia and Mexico sent the most communications of any country in the world. The women defenders accompanied by PBI are not an exception to this pattern identified by the Special Rapporteur: several among them received death threats in 2010.

During 2010, the OHCHR documented three murders of women human rights defenders:⁴ those who lost their lives were Bety Cariño, leader of the community organisation Cactus, in an ambush of a humanitarian caravan in Oaxaca; Josefina Reyes, who denounced military abuses in Ciudad Juárez; and Marisela Escobedo Ortiz, murdered opposite the Chihuahua State Government as she demanded justice for her daughter, Rubí Marisol Frayre Escobedo, who had also been murdered. Of the seven cases the OHCHR collected of HRDs who had to leave their places of residence because of a critical security situation, five were women – including Obtilia Eugenio Manuel of the OPIM, an organisation accompanied by PBI.

Despite the serious risks they face, the women accompanied by PBI Mexico continue their valuable work in defence of human rights by providing legal defence for victims of human rights violations, promoting indigenous rights, and developing productive and reforestation projects, among others.



PBI volunteer with Alba Cruz in Oaxaca, November 2010. Photo: PBI

¹ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Sekaggya*, 20 December 2010, p.5. Available from www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/defenders/docs/A-HRC-16-44.pdf.

² *Ibid.*, p6.

³ *Ibid.*, p9.

⁴ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico, *Actualización 2010: Informe sobre la situación de los defensores de derechos humanos en México* [Update 2010: Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in Mexico], November 2010, p.8. Available from: www.hchr.org.mx/Documentos/Libros/2010/L241110B.pdf.

In 2010, PBI Mexico accompanied the following women human rights defenders:

- **Alba Cruz Ramos**, lawyer with the 25 November Liberation Committee, and other Committee colleagues, such as **Sara Méndez**;
- **María de la Luz Martínez García**, member of Human Rights and Advice Centre for Indigenous Peoples (CEDHAPI);
- **Minerva Martínez Lázaro**, coordinator of the 'Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño' Regional Human Rights Centre, A.C. (BARCA-DH);
- **Obtilia Eugenio Manuel**, president of the Organisation of the Me'phaa Indigenous People (OPIM), and other OPIM members such as **Inés Fernández**;
- **Tita Radilla**, vicepresident of the Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (AFADEM) in Atoyac;
- **Celsa Valdovinos**, founder of the Women's Environmentalist Organisation of the Sierra of Petatlán, A.C. (OMESP);
- **Matilde Pérez Romero**, coordinator of Civil Monitor of the Police and Public Security Forces of the Montaña of Guerrero (MOCIPOL);
- Various women members of the '**Tlachinollan**' Human Rights Centre of the Montaña;
- **Valentina Rosendo Cantú**.

In Oaxaca, PBI provided security workshops to the Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity Oaxaca (Consortio para el Diálogo Parlamentario y la Equidad Oaxaca), an organisation that promotes respect for women's human rights, gender equity and

equal opportunities. In Guerrero, PBI monitors the security situation of The Skein (La Madeja), a network of women's organisations which provides legal and psychological evaluations for women who are victims of human rights violations, and also investigates violence against women and femicide.

Towards a protection mechanism for Human Rights Defenders

Defending human rights in Mexico is a dangerous job. This has been documented in reports by the UN and the IACHR, which show that Mexican authorities and institutions have been unable to protect human rights defenders and journalists. Acts of aggression, harassment, surveillance and attacks are daily occurrences.⁵ In this context, the recommendations of the international community and the needs set out by civil society organisations (CSOs) to the Mexican government highlight the urgent need to implement a special mechanism to protect human rights defenders and journalists, and to guarantee the prevention, investigation and punishment of all attacks against them.

The Mexican government responded to these demands in February 2010. In a forum which brought together Mexican civil society organizations and the OHCHR, the dialogue leading to a protection mechanism for journalists and people defending human rights was begun. The forum concluded with the agreement that the Mexican government would promote the design of a

⁵ IACHR, *Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas*, 7 March 2006; UN Human Rights Council, *Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, Mexico*, A/HRC/11/27, 3 March 2009; UN Human Rights Committee, *Concluding Observations of the Human Rights Committee, CCPR/C/MEX/CO/5* (pp.2,7), 17 May 2010; OHCHR, *Defender los derechos humanos: Entre el compromiso y el riesgo* [Defending human rights: Between commitment and risk], October 2009, updated 2010.

comprehensive mechanism for the prevention, protection and investigation of attacks against defenders and journalists. This mechanism would be both subsidiary and complementary to the existing State obligations, and would have active civil society participation. However, in mid-2010 the initiative lost momentum because of changes within the government, and in autumn, under strong political pressure, a protection mechanism was created for journalists only, thus abandoning the initial idea of a single instrument for both journalists and defenders.

During 2010, a range of civil society organizations (CSO) decided to form the CSO Group. In their meetings, they reflected on their protection needs and the characteristics required of a governmental mechanism so that it might have an impact on the risks faced by HRDs. PBI Mexico was invited to participate in this space as an external, supervisory organisation, so it could provide its perspective and feedback based on its long international experience providing protection to human rights defenders. One of the first outcomes from this Group occurred in October 2010, when they sent a proposal for the mechanism to the Mexican government.⁶ PBI facilitated the participation of defenders we accompany in Guerrero and Oaxaca in this Group, particularly during a national meeting in November 2010.

Given the lack of progress made, the CSOs requested a thematic hearing before the IACHR on the need to create a protection mechanism for men and women human rights defenders, thus seeking to open space for dialogue with the government. Mexican government representatives subsequently stated that they were willing to listen to the CSOs' demands. In February 2011, two

representatives of the CSO Group participated in the official Mexican government delegation to Colombia to analyse and better understand Colombia's equivalent protection mechanism.

The civil society organisations are now awaiting the Mexican government's follow up on the commitments it has made, and have requested – as a matter of highest priority – that their opinions be considered and included in the design of the government's protection mechanism. Given the gravity of the situation faced by HRDs and journalists, the two professional groups have decided to push for a parallel non-governmental protection mechanism which is to be coordinated by social organisations.

Because of the need for a protection mechanism for human rights defenders, PBI has worked intensely since 2010 to ensure that the Mexican government makes progress in this area with due speed and diligence. In particular, we have conducted advocacy within Mexico and abroad to highlight the importance of establishing a protection mechanism, in consultation with CSOs and taking into account the specific needs of at-risk HRDs. One of our work tools will be a special bulletin to be published in April 2011.

Consolidating our international support networks

In 2010, PBI Mexico continued to seek international support for the organisations and individuals it accompanies, work which is also made possible by the efforts of PBI Country Groups in different parts of the world. Undoubtedly, tours are one of the most effective tools in building the support networks which are so important for PBI's protective accompaniment strategy.

In 2010, three human rights defenders accompanied by PBI in Mexico visited Spain,

⁶ The proposed mechanism can be found here (in Spanish): www.libertad-expression.org.mx/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Resumen-Ejecutivo-Propuesta-OSC-28-octubre-2010.pdf. For further information on the mechanism, also in Spanish, see: www.cencos.org/es/node/25401.

Germany, the United Kingdom, France and the Netherlands, speaking about their experiences and seeking commitments for help from governments, politicians, lawyers, experts, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and activists. One successful example was the tour to Spain and the United Kingdom by Santiago Aguirre, lawyer with the Guerrero-based 'Tlachinollan' Human Rights Centre.

Tlachinollan members have been victim to threats and harassment because of the high-profile cases led by the institution, including those of Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo, both indigenous women who were raped by Mexican army personnel in 2002. Santiago Aguirre met with institutions and authorities in the United Kingdom and Spain, thanks to the work done by the relevant PBI Country Groups, explaining the situation of risk that he, his colleagues and the people they represent live with, using first-hand examples to sketch out the security situation facing men and women human rights defenders throughout Mexico.

In London, Santiago Aguirre gained political commitments from representatives of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and from various Members of Parliament and the House of Lords. He gained legal support from the most important lawyers' networks in the United Kingdom, and strengthened the strategic support of important NGOs such as Amnesty International and Article 19.



Santiago Aguirre of Tlachinollan with Lord Brennan, House of Lords, London, July 2010. Photo: PBI

In addition, Santiago took advantage of his presence in the United Kingdom to participate in the launch of the Bar Human Rights Committee of England and Wales (BHRC) report⁷ at the House of Lords. It documents human rights violations, failings of the justice system, and the dangers faced by men and women human rights defenders in the states of Guerrero and Oaxaca.

This report is itself the fruit of a tour to Mexico coordinated by PBI Mexico together with PBI Country Groups. A delegation of international lawyers visited Mexico in December 2009, meeting human rights defenders, NGOs and Mexican authorities. The BHRC's report is one result of that visit.

For PBI to be able to dissuade attacks against defenders, and react to serious incidents, it must be able to count on a support network abroad. In 2011 PBI plans to continue this kind of visits to strengthen and consolidate to this important source of international support.

The close collaboration of PBI in México, the United Kingdom and Spain with lawyers groups has had to borne fruit in 2010. During the year, apart from the BHRC report, the

⁷BHRC, *Recalling the Rule of Law: Report on the lawyers' delegation to Mexico*, July 2010. Available from: www.barhumanrights.org.uk/docs/reports/2010/Mexicio_report_2010.pdf.

Council of Spanish Lawyers (Consejo General de la Abogacía Española, CGAE) presented an expert report in favour of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Centre and OPIM to the Inter-American Court of Human Rights. Both lawyers organizations were active throughout 2010 sending letters to Mexican authorities, preparing reports and amicus briefs to the Inter-American Court and the Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers on the deficiencies or lack of compliance with the sentences in the cases of Rosendo Radilla, Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo, amongst others.

Advocating on behalf of defenders

As part of our protection strategy for human rights defenders, PBI carries out advocacy work aiming to bring the Mexican state to comply with its international obligations to protect human rights defenders. Advocacy and lobbying on behalf of defenders is one of our main areas of work. This work is carried out not only through our national and international support networks (as explained above) but also through direct advocacy work with authorities in Mexico and abroad.⁸ These are just some of our main activities and achievements in 2010:

- in March we travelled to the USA to carry out advocacy work during the session of the UN Committee on Human Rights which reviewed Mexico;
- in April and May we accompanied and advocated on behalf of Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo during the hearings at the Inter-American Court
- we met and submitted information to the Special Rapporteurs who visited Mexico in 2010 (OAS and UN Special Rapporteur on

⁸ See table "PBI Mexico in numbers" to see numerical data on the meetings we carried out in 2010 with Mexican authorities and international organizations.

Freedom of Expression and UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers);

- in November we attended a joint meeting with high level officials of the Mexican Ministries of the Interior, of Foreign Affairs, of Public Security and of the Office of the Attorney General of the Republic;
- in November we met and established a communication channel with the newly elected Governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cué Monteagudo;
- we provided support to members of the diplomatic corps visiting Raúl Hernández in Ayutla;
- together with other organizations, we lobbied the European Parliament to issue a resolution in favour of Mexican defenders, and for the implementation of the EU Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders;
- together with PBI Spain and PBI UK urged parliamentary questions on the situation of defenders in Spain and the United Kingdom.

Reinforcing the security of human rights defenders

That Mexico is a country where it is dangerous to defend human rights is not the opinion of Amnesty International alone.⁹ It is a reality which is backed up by the reports of various other organisations that specialise in human rights matters,¹⁰ and by the quantity of requests for assistance that continue to reach PBI Mexico.

The need for a governmental protection mechanism for human rights defenders is something which Mexican civil society organisations have been pointing out for quite some time. But while their dialogue with the

⁹ Amnesty International, *Standing up for justice and dignity: Human rights defenders in Mexico*, AMR 41/032/2009. 31 December 2009. Available from: www.amnesty.org/en/library/asset/AMR41/032/2009/en/30eef2b9-7f45-47bb-8397-bd9beb0a5cf4/amr410322009eng.pdf.

¹⁰ See the list provided in footnote 5 (above).

government has stagnated¹¹ and the implementation of the protection measures already granted by national and international bodies is hindered,¹² Mexican activists are increasingly conscious of the need to implement their own protective tools.

This reality, together with the fact that PBI is one of only two organisations with a permanent presence in Mexico who offers security advice, has required a greater investment of project resources into its security supervision program to be able to respond to the demand.

In addition to the permanent supervision PBI offers the organisations and individuals it accompanies, the project offers a program of security workshops that organisations in Guerrero, Oaxaca and Mexico City can request – regardless of whether they receive PBI accompaniment.

In the program's first workshop, PBI shares the tools which it has developed in its more than 30 years' work in conflict areas, in order to conduct a thorough diagnostic study of the security situation facing a defender or organisation. Between the first and second workshops, the attendees should complete a series of tasks to develop their own diagnostic study; PBI is available for consultation at any time in this phase.

The second workshop aims to help HRDs develop their own security plans, and places emphasis on the need to implement an institutional security policy and establish response plans in case of emergency. PBI also

offers workshops on information management, digital security, and security in rural areas.

In 2010, PBI trained 115 men and women HRDs from 10 organisations who work on various issues, including indigenous rights, the struggle against impunity and migrants' rights. Grassroots groups working in rural areas have received training, as have organisations running some of Mexico's most emblematic cases and the regional offices of large international bodies.



PBI security workshop with AFADEM members in Atoyac, Guerrero, in September 2010. Photo: PBI

But PBI has also expanded its security-related work to include other activities that are relevant to current events. While acting as an 'external advisor' to the Civil Society Organisations Group (Espacio de Organizaciones de la Sociedad Civil), which has developed a formal proposal for a governmental protection mechanism, PBI has also been offering its point of view to the Mexican government on the same issue. In its role as an objective advisor, PBI can offer support in seeking the institutional changes needed to protect human rights defenders at the national level.

Another example of PBI's work as an expert in security issues is the risk analysis which the project completed upon request, as part of the implementation of the provisional measures granted by the Inter-American

¹¹ *Estado incumple gravemente su obligación de proteger a periodistas y defensoras y defensores de derechos humanos* [State seriously noncompliant with its obligation to protect men and women journalists and human rights defenders], Communique signed by numbers Mexican CSOs, 14 March 2011. Available here:

http://www.cmdpdh.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=323%3Aestado-incumple-gravemente-su-obligacion-de-proteger-a-periodistas-y-defensoras-y-defensores-de-derechos-humanos&catid=47%3Adefensoras-y-defensores&Itemid=187&lang=es.

¹² BHRC, *op.cit.*

Court of Human Rights to one woman human rights defender.

PBI Mexico's status and capacity in security and protection issues continues to grow. There are, however, challenges. The number of requests we receive asking for advice is well beyond our resources, and the number of invitations for national and international bodies asking us to participate in seminars and events on security issues is ever increasing.

Mexico continues to be a dangerous country for the defence of human rights, and PBI wants to remain at the forefront of efforts to provide those who dare to raise their voices with the protection they need.

Six months more of the dream: A woman volunteer in Oaxaca

A few years ago, not so long ago, someone mentioned the term 'human rights' to me for the first time. At that time, I'd already been to high school, I'd finished studying at college, I had a higher technical qualification and a university degree. A lot of 'education' in a 'developed' country, the so-called first world. But no-one had ever spoken to me about anything like human rights. My friend slowly started to teach me what they were. Day by day, she spoke to me about justice, struggle, truth, bravery, dignity, rights, and eventually made me fall in love with the issue and decide the path I wanted to follow.

The same friend then spoke to me about Peace Brigades International. She told me about Mexico, Guatemala, Nepal and Colombia. Thanks to her, I met men and women human rights defenders from different places, who also spoke to me about how Peace Brigades had helped them in their countries. And that's how, six months ago, I arrived in Oaxaca with a suitcase full of hopes and dreams that are quickly becoming an amazing reality.

I have been in Mexico since then, working as a volunteer with PBI and learning about and accompanying men and women human rights defenders in Oaxaca. I'm happy to see the fruits of their work to win justice or a more dignified life for others, but I also see the danger they face just for defending human rights. To know people who dedicate – and sometimes even risk – their lives for the rights of others is something that can truly change your life.



PBI volunteers with members of the 25 November Committee in Oaxaca, in November 2010. Photo: PBI

There are some people who don't understand me and my choice very well. 'You're crazy, Mexico's so dangerous!' 'How can you leave your job to go so far away and work for nothing?' 'You'll never have anything if you do this, a house or a stable job – what kind of life is that?' But I don't like the way that people assume how I'm supposed to live. I don't want to spend my evenings sitting on the sofa in my house, watching television while I ignore my neighbour's screams. I don't want to continue being an accomplice to the many companies from my country who are destroying wonderful places and people. I don't want to be dependent on what I can or cannot buy. I don't want a house or a stable job. I want a better life than that.

PBI has provided me with great opportunities. It has allowed me to discover Mexico, this amazing country, with its colours and happiness, its tacos and *son jarocho* music, its indigenous peoples and master wrestlers, with its discrimination, hunger and thirst, with all the impunity for grave human rights violations and its 'fight against drug trafficking', with the best and the worst.

In these months I have put faces to names of more and more men and women human rights defenders; of activists who fight for justice, freedom, respect for life and Mother Earth; of trade unionists who risk their lives so that the few cannot exploit the many; of people who believe that love of nature is

essential so we can all live better, who will not remain silent before the atrocities that are committed on a daily basis, who don't want a more consumerist world at all costs, but a more human and dignified world. PBI is giving me the opportunity to work so they can continue fighting with fewer risks and less fear, and that is the most beautiful job I can imagine.

I feel that in a short time I have grown a lot, professionally and – even more importantly – as a person. I still have six months to go, or perhaps the rest of my life...



PBI volunteer with Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, Ayutla, Guerrero, August 2010, Photo: PBI

Members of PBI's Mexico Project in 2010**Volunteers in Guerrero**

Marco Sarasin (Italy), Liselot Petry (Germany), Ben Leather (United Kingdom), Sandra Froidevaux (Switzerland), Juliane Marquardt (Germany), Cecilia Mondì (Italy), Sierra Shraff-Thomas (United States), Wendy Schutte (Holland), Patricia García (Spain), Benoit Foulques de Montaigu (France), Mirjuam Muis (Holland), Michael Schlegel (Germany), Ester Romero (Spain), Emilie de Wolf (Belgium)

Volunteers in Oaxaca

Carla Cavarreta (Italy), Giulia Branda (Italy), Graciela Martínez (Spain), Alexia Ghyoot (Belgium), Peter Eckersley (Australia), Caroline Hay (United Kingdom), Rocío Carneros (Spain), Stefan Zimmer (Germany), Judith Huber (Switzerland).

PBI Team Members in Mexico City:

Michael Tamblyn – advocacy coordinator (Australia & United Kingdom)
Marianne Bertrand – team volunteer coordinator (France)
Maude Chalvin – security workshops and institutional memory coordinator (Canada)
Ben Leather – security workshops and publications coordinator (United Kingdom)
Ana Carolina Bustamante – administrator (Mexico)

PBI Members in Europe

Susana Nistal – advocacy coordinator (Spain)
David Ávila – finances & fundraising (Portugal)
Sergi Bach – project coordinator & (later) fundraising (Catalonia)
Lisa Maracani – project coordinator (Italy)

Training and Selection Committee

Karim Jah (Germany), Maik Muller (Germany), Silvia Carballo (Spain), Carla Cavarreta (Italy), Sandra Camacho (Catalonia)

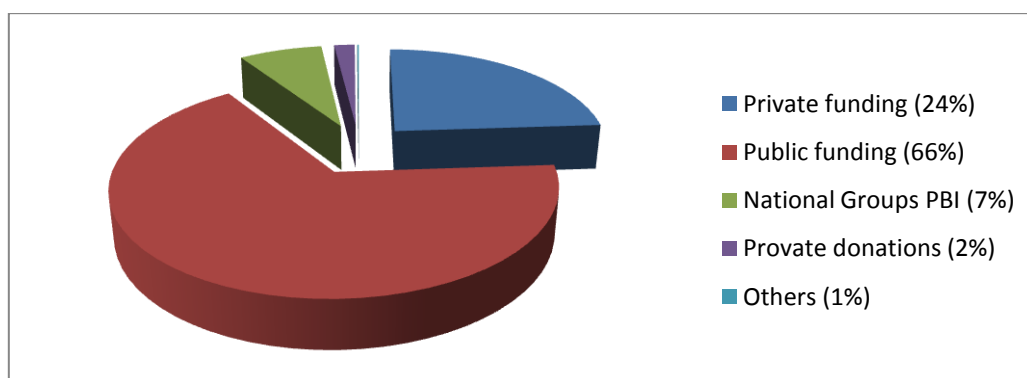
Project Committee

Karim Jah (Germany), Marielle Tonossi (Switzerland), Gregor Maass (Germany)

PBI Mexico: 2010 in numbers		
Physical presence		
Organisations and HRDs accompanied by PBI Mexico – 11	Accompaniments	Meetings
Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (AFADEM)	16	9
'Tlachinollan' Human Rights Centre of the Montaña	26	14
Human Rights and Advice Centre for Indigenous Peoples (CEDHAPI)	14	16
25 November Liberation Committee	47	12
Cerezo Committee	16	4
Civil Monitor of the Police and Public Security Forces of the Montaña of Guerrero (Mocipol)	14	1
Women's Environmentalist Organisation of the Sierra of Petatlán (OMESP)	4 (2-3 days each)	-
Organisation of the Me'phaa Indigenous People (OPIM)	30	6
Valentina Rosendo Cantú	8	-
New Accompaniments		
Since July 2010: Father Alejandro Solalinde Guerra and staff of the 'Hermanos en el Camino' Migrant Shelter	4	8
Since December 2010: 'Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño' Regional Human Rights Centre, A.C. (BARCA-DH)	4	9
Total	183	79
Advocacy		
Meetings with authorities	Guerrero	Oaxaca
Meetings with the diplomatic corps and international organisations	59	
Meetings with Mexican federal authorities	18	
Meetings with Mexican state-level authorities	31	19
Meetings with Mexican municipal-level authorities	23	31
Publications		
2 Bulletins: <i>Human Rights Defenders Behind Bars // Mexico Before the Inter-American Court</i>		
Interviews with Mexican HR defenders	11	
Security workshops and assessment		
Workshops and assessments in physical and computer security	115 beneficiaries	10 workshops

Financial Information - Income in US dollars (unaudited data)

Donors	Income
PBI Germany	
Diakonia	29,815
Misereor	10,984
CPS	84,138
Zivik 2009	1,319
Zivik 2010	109,537
Weltwärts	8,227
PBI Germany	2,485
PBI United Kingdom	
Law Society	14,763
Human Right Defenders fund	-
Sigrid Rausing Trust	17,218
Rowan Foundation	-
Network for social change	-
PBI UK	12,533
PBI Spanish State	
Valladolid municipality	14,729
Santander municipality	30,990
Valladolid province	30,318
Basque Government	-
PBI France	
Minster of Foreign Affairs	14,944
Non Violence XXII	2,374
AFFD	1,020
PBI Canada	
PWRF - MH program	2,694
Basilian Fathers	4,198
Other National Groups	
PBI Belgium	1,001
PBI Switzerland	12,582
PBI Italy	3,938
PBI USA (Overbrook Foundation)	3,500
Other donors	
Fund For Nonviolence	19,000
Otros programmes	1,472
Personal donations	6,568
Exchange rate	396
Bank interests	153
Total	440,916



Financial Information – Expenditure in US dollars *(unaudited data)*

Budget lines	Expenditure
Field presence	
Guerrero team	106,321
Oaxaca team	67,952
Security workshops	3,890
Volunteers selection and training	14,960
Strategic presence, volunteers coordination, public relations and advocacy in Mexico City	74,727
Advocacy and Public Relations abroad	
European representation	29,424
North American representation	2,676
Publications	4,844
HRD speakers tours	1,500
Administration and general coordination	85,697
Governance	
Project Committee meetings	13,992
Contributions to international PBI structures (communication, advocacy, fundraising, evaluations, etc.)	28,313
Other	
Project and Global Audits	4,952
Exchange rate	4,645
Other adjustments	3,470
Total	447,363

