Annual Report 2013
PBI Mexico, February 2014
INTRODUCTION

2013 was an intense year for PBI’s Mexico Project. A new federal government, the establishment of a new team in Mexico’s north, and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Mexico are some of the events which marked PBI’s work in favor of human rights and human rights defenders (HRDs). The evaluation of the year is mixed: on the one hand, we’ve noted significant achievements, both by PBI and by Mexican civil society; but on the other, we are witness to a situation and a broader context which causes great concern. This Annual Report reflects both realities.

By opening the Northern Team in Chihuahua, PBI has adapted to Mexico’s current context and has followed up on the exploratory mission of 2012. As well as starting work in Chihuahua and Coahuila, PBI continues to increase its presence in Oaxaca, accompanying a new organization there and offering significant support to local civil society organizations (CSOs). Reports published in 2013 by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico (OCHUM, ACUDDEH), demonstrate that the states of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) for Mexico are some of the events which marked PBI’s work in favor of human rights and human rights defenders (HRDs). The campaign is an initiative of the “All Rights for All” Network (Red “Todos los Derechos para Todos y Todas”; Red TGD), a national network of CSOs. PBI has supported this important effort to increase awareness of the work of HRDs.

The importance of connecting PBI’s work in Mexico with advocacy on an international level was confirmed in 2013. PBI, together with other actors, was able to provide information to key members of the international community on the work of HRDs, and motivate them to undertake initiatives to support human rights and human rights defenders. In a UPR year, PBI reinforced its advocacy work abroad, holding more than 60 meetings with key actors in Europe alone. PBI-organized tours for HRDs reflected the link between work in the field and work at an international level. The HRDs invited on tours clearly acknowledged their significant impact on their work, above and beyond the benefits of making contacts, increasing political support and communicating with the international community. Instead, the greatest impact is the moral support, and feeling the solidarity of so many others: this allows HRDs to continue the struggle, although it is a long, difficult and often dangerous path. This aspect, which of course cannot be quantified, is an inherent part of PBI’s daily work, the work of being by the side of human rights defenders, making spaces and giving voice to those who fight for social justice in extremely difficult conditions.

Beyond the security and protection training offered, and the political work of advocacy and dissuasion, it is the physical presence, the human solidarity, the active listening, the shared space which are the fundamental aspects of PBI’s work that make men and women human rights defenders feel accompanied in the struggle. PBI feels privileged to accompany human rights defenders, and we thank them and the institutions and individuals who supported our work in Mexico in 2013. PBI Mexico hopes to continue counting on your support.

Happy reading!


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PBI Mexico Donors in 2013

Amnesty International – Swedish Amnesty Fund (Sweden)
Basilian Fathers – Human Development Fund (Canada)
Bread for the World / Brot für Welt (Germany)
British Embassy in Mexico – Foreign and Commonwealth Office
Campbell World Fund (Canada)
Canadian Embassy in Mexico – Canada Fund for Local Initiatives
Civil Peace Service (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)
Dutch Embassy in Mexico
Fedevaco: City of Renens (Switzerland)
Fedevaco: City of Rolle (Switzerland)
Institute of International Affairs (Ifa), Zivik Programme (Civil Conflict Resolution)
(german Federal Foreign Office)
Maya Behn-Eschenburg Foundation (Switzerland)
MacArthur Foundation (United States)
Maya Behn-Eschenburg Foundation (Switzerland)
Miseeror (Germany)
Non Violence XXI (France)
Norwegian Embassy in Mexico
OPSEU – Ontario Public Service Employees Union (Canada)
Overpark Foundation (United States)
PBI Country Groups (Italy and UK)
Protestant Church Saint Gallen-Tablat (Switzerland)
Santander Municipality (Spain)
Sigrid Raising Trust (UK)
Solidarity International (Switzerland)
Swiss Embassy in Mexico
Valladolid Municipality (Spain)
Valladolid Provincial Council (Spain)

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Event to celebrate the launch of the new Northern Team in Chihuahua, October 2013

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First year of the government of Enrique Peña Nieto: Between promising speeches and worrying realities

The year 2013 marked the first year of Enrique Peña Nieto’s presidency. The previous six-year term ended with a tragic toll to the “war against organized crime”, 26,000 people disappeared, a crisis of insecurity, and militarization across the country, all of which severely aggravated the precarious human rights situation in Mexico. Peña Nieto opened his government with the promise of reducing violence and human rights violations – one year on, Mexican and international organizations came to the conclusion that neither the human rights nor the security situation had improved.

Peña Nieto coordinated the “Pacto por México” (Pact for Mexico) between Mexico’s three strongest political forces, in order to promote 95 structural reforms in his six-year term. With this agreement, the president promised the gradual return to barracks of soldiers and naval officers, as long as conditions were suitable. In January 2014, the weekly magazine Proceso reported that Peña Nieto and the head of the National Defense Ministry (Secretaría de Defensa Nacional, SEDENA) want to “increase the strength of the Mexican army to provide a legal framework which will legitimize the security forces fighting in the streets against organized crime. There is a notable discrepancy between promises made and current facts, as noted in the previous section. According to independent sources, the first 11 months of Peña Nieto’s mandate saw more than 19,000 executions. Peña Nieto’s strategy which continues to generate human rights violations. They perceived a lack of the concrete results to be expected in the wake of Mexico’s legislative and institutional changes. Statistics gathered from a range of reports indicate point to a prevailing climate of strong hostility against HRDs. The states with the highest number of attacks against HRDs are Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guerrero and the Federal District. The year 2013 was marked by strong social protests across Mexico. In the Federal District, an increase in the violent repression of protests was noted, as occurred on October 2 when more than one hundred protesters were detained. Because of this occurrence, the Inter-American Unit for Disappeared People (Unidad Especializada en Búsqueda de Personas Desaparecidas) was established within the Federal Attorney General’s Office (Procuraduría General de la República, PGR). The president publicly recognized the important work of men and women human rights defenders, and the federal government made positive steps towards compliance with sentences handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) (see page 10).

However, Human Rights Watch6 and Amnesty International7 expressed concern for persistent patterns of impunity, forced disappearances, torture, femicides, and attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) and migrants, as well as a security strategy which continues to generate human rights violations. They perceived a lack of the concrete results to be expected in the wake of Mexico’s legislative and institutional changes. Statistics gathered from a range of reports indicate point to a prevailing climate of strong hostility against HRDs. The states with the highest number of attacks against HRDs are Oaxaca, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guerrero and the Federal District. Court of Human Rights expressed its concern, and more than one hundred civil society representatives from 18 countries condemned the situation during the June 2013, approved by the Chamber of Deputies. In December, the Federal District (Federal Law of Manifestaciones Públicas en el Distrito Federal), approved by the Chamber of Deputies, represents a “reversal in the protection of freedoms and human rights in Mexico City.”

The current federal government faces serious issues in the coming years in regard to human rights, such as the effective implementation of the General Victims’ Law, the Specialized Search Unit for Disappeared People, and the Protection Mechanism, so that institutional and legislative initiatives can be translated into concrete improvements in Mexico’s human rights situation.

For Peña, travel to Europe allowed her to achieve the important objective of increasing her network of international contacts, to keep working for migrant groups and seeking those who have been forcibly disappeared, as well as exposing the working conditions for men and women human rights defenders (HRDs) in Mexico and particularly in Coahuila. In a letter sent to Alma, PBI highlights “the little touches” and the people who surrounded her, making her network of international contacts and the general public. Alma visited five countries – Switzerland, Spain, France, Holland and Germany – in 20 days, giving her networks an incredible boost in countries – Switzerland, Spain, France, Holland and Germany – in 20 days, giving her networks an incredible boost.

Some months after Alma’s tour, a video jointly produced by PBI and FUUNDEC was shown in London during an event for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, torture, forced disappearances and military jurisdiction.

We will continue to build solidarity networks between Mexico and other communities, in order to continue supporting the work conducted by Mexican HRDs.


5 “Mensaje del Presidente de la República, Enrique Peña Nieto, con motivo de la celebración del Día de los Derechos Humanos, el 10 de diciembre de 2013,” available at http://www.presidencia.gob.mx


8 “La evolución de la política en derechos humanos en el mundo,” available at http://www.minci.gob.mx

9 “La evolución de la política en derechos humanos en el mundo,” available at http://www.minci.gob.mx


Peña Nieto opened his government with the promise of reducing violence and human rights violations – one year on, Mexican and international organizations came to the conclusion that neither the human rights nor the security situation had improved.

Building solidarity networks

One positive outcome of the tour was the Dear Colleague Letter12, sent from congresspeople from both major political parties to Secretary of State John Kerry, asking that human rights form part of the United States’ agenda in relation to Mexico. The letter covered the risky security situation of HRDs, the inadequate implementation of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, torture, forced disappearances and military jurisdiction.

We will continue to build solidarity networks between Mexico and other communities, in order to continue supporting the work conducted by Mexican HRDs.
High risk involved in defending communities

In 2013, Oaxaca was shown to be the most dangerous Mexican state in which to defend human rights. Attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) continue, and human rights organizations, like the Committee for the Integral Defense of Human Rights (Coordinadora Oaxaqueña de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobi- xa, Código-DH) and the Bartolomé Carrasco Human Rights Observatory (Centro Regional de Derechos Humanos Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño, Barca-DH), have been victim to office raids, arbitrary detention, harassment, death threats and data theft. The maximum expression of this violence against HRDs occurred in the assassinations of the HRDs Herón Sixto López, of the Center for Guidance and Advice for Indigenous Peoples (Cen- tro de Orientación y Asesoría a Pueblos Indígenas), and Héctor Regalado Jiménez, member of the Public Assembly of the People of Juchitán (Asamblea Popular del Pueblo de Juchitán, APPJ). Despite this context of grave human rights violations, Oaxacan organizations have continued their work and made significant progress in the struggle for justice and peace.

PBI promotes space for peace in Oaxaca

PBI continued to pursue dialogue with authorities to express our concern for the risks faced by HRDs. On a state level, PBI met with the governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cué Monteagudo, on two occasions. In January, PBI held a meeting with authorities about the risks faced by HRDs and the protection mechanisms promoted by the current state government. In November, PBI opened a working table and invited the gov- ernor, the heads of various government entities, and representatives of civil society to participate in a joint campaign to increase protection for HRDs.

In March, PBI facilitated a round table between the US representatives in Mexico, Mexi- co and CSOs, where the latter expressed their work in defense of human rights and the risks they face as a conse- quence. The first secretary of the Canadian Embassy and the Dutch ambassador visi- ted the state at different times to meet with organizations, where issues such as natural resources and foreign investment were addressed. In an initiative promoted by PBI, all of these embassies met with Oaxacan authorities, including the gover- nor, and expressed the concerns they had heard from the CSOs. They also urged the strengthening of Oaxacan human rights institutions, which was a specific request from PBI. In December, PBI opened a delegation from embassies of Germany, Norway and Switzerland attended a tour of the Is- thmus of Tehuantepec with PBI’s accompaniment. Du- ring the visit, organized by Código-DH, the embassy representatives met with the Public Assembly of the People of Juchitán and col- lected information on the conflicts resulting from the construction of megaproj- ects in the zone, as well as the context of violence against community HRDs.

Continuing to follow up on “Mission Oaxaca,” promoted by PBI and the “All Rights for All” Network in 2012, we called around 15 Oaxacan organizations to two coordina- tion spaces on security and protection issues. They worked on formulæ to express civil society’s requests to the Mexican State to guarantee their pro- tection, and emphasizing that recognition of HRDs’ work should be a protection tool and guiding focus. In 2013, PBI continued to share protection spaces among the CSOs, which allowed them to share protection tools and evaluate a joint campaign for the recognition of HRDs.

As part of our aim to make visible the situation of men and women HRDs, PBI supported Alba Cruz’s March visit to Eu- rope at the invitation of the Paris Bar Asso- ciation. As a result of the tour, Amnesty International and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders issued urgent actions on a case detailed by Alba. In addition, Alba was able to lo- bby, together with other actors, for the UN resolution against the criminalization of HRDs, which was passed that same month.

In December, two HRDs conducted ac- tivities in Europe with PBI’s support. Miguel Ángel Vázquez, of Services for the Promotion of Human Rights in Brussels, and with support from the Canadian Embassy, visited theEPS Human Rights Office in Paris. There, they met with the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the European Parliament (MEPs), and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) to discuss the protection of HRDs. They called on the OHCHR to better implement the Johannesburg Principles, especially the right to access justice of HRDs, and the protection mechanisms that should be developed to ensure the full enjoyment of the right to judicial protection.

Oaxaca Team volunteer with civil society representatives concerned about the wind turbines on the Issthmus of Tehuantepec © PBI Mexico

In line with these concerns, PBI began to accompany EDUCA, an organization which offers guidance to indigenous organizations that face the challenge of defending their rights. PBI conducted the first accompaniment to the Regio- nal Forum on Mining and its Impacts in Indigenous Communities in Magdalena Teitapac. EDUCA, as part of its work to accompany mining companies to protect human rights, will offer training and workshops for the community HRDs in legitimating the resistance to large-scale development projects which have serious impacts on their economic, social and cultural rights.

Recognition and protection of human rights defense

Código-DH and Alba Cruz received an honorable mention from the German and French Embassies for their promotion of human rights in public policy in Oaxaca. PBI had nominated Código-DH for the “Gilberto Bosques Human Rights Prize,” and had written letters of support. Both embassies made public declarations re- cognizing the vulnerability and special need for protection of community HRDs in Oaxaca.

Because of this context of violent, PBI ac- tivated its support network and achieved positive results in the implementation of precautionary measures. PBI’s participa- tion helped reopen discussions between Father Alejandro Solalinde and the Mexican authorities in regard to his protection measures. Following the data theft ex- perienced by Nora Martínez of Barracuda-DH, PBI had lobbied for with the government, an outcome that limited the risk of future data theft. The CSOs received the closure of the investigation of the man who had been the victim of data theft.

In June, PBI met with the Governor of Oaxaca, Gabino Cué Monteagudo, to present the results of our campaign for the protection of human rights defenders. The Governor received the report, which highlighted the risks faced by HRDs. The Governor expressed his concern to the CSOs and invited them to continue their work. PBI had nominated Código-DH for the “Gilberto Bosques Human Rights Prize,” and had written letters of support. Both embassies made public declarations re- cognizing the vulnerability and special need for protection of community HRDs in Oaxaca.

Because of their high level of risk, va- rious human rights defenders have been targeted with precautionary measures. PBI’s participa- tion helped reopen discussions between Father Alejandro Solalinde and Mexican authorities in regard to his protection measures. Following the data theft ex- perienced by Nora Martínez of Barracuda-DH, PBI had lobbied for with the government, an outcome that limited the risk of future data theft. The CSOs received the closure of the investigation of the man who had been the victim of data theft.

In September, following PBI’s activation of the Protection of Human Rights Office, two former members of the CSOs, which allowed them to share protection tools and evaluate a joint campaign for the recognition of HRDs. The tour was very useful in terms of building an international support network for the HRD’s work, and allowing the organization to learn more about European tools for the protection of HRDs. Sara Méndez, from Código-DH, attended the UN Forum on Business and Human Rights in Geneva, and was invited by the Swiss govern- ment to participate in the launch of the guidelines for the protection of HRDs.

Defending communities in Oaxaca

The year 2013 witnessed a new wave of attacks against community human rights defenders. According to the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Margaret Seka- ggwa, the human rights defenders who address environmental and land issues are among those at greatest risk of human rights violations. At the same time, Sekaggya noted that Mexico was one of the coun- tries to which she had issued the highest number of communications in response to attacks reported against community HRDs.

On the Issthmus of Tehuantepec, wind farms have faced the resistance of the communities and indigenous people who have opposed this kind of development. Community HRDs have demanded their self-determination, and to choose their own, inclusive development models. Members of the Assembly of Indigenous People of the Issthmus of Tehuantepec in Defense of Land and Territory (Asam- bia de Pueblos Indígenas del istmo de Tehuantepec en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio, APIPTDT) have reported acts of aggression by fences and non-state actors.

In June 2013, Héctor Regalado – an oppo- nent of the wind farm Bi Hichoo – was murdered. Also particularly worrying are the accusations of violence leveled at the Auxiliary Bank, Industrial and Commercial Police (Policía Auxiliar, Bancana, Industrial y Comercial, PABIC)15, a branch of the Oaxaca Police, which also offers pri- vate security services to some companies operating in the Issthmus.

Pollution and environmental issues are an important source of conflict in Oaxaca. In March, PBI facilitated a round table between the human rights organizations, the Mexican State and the CSOs, in which they expressed their concern for the risks faced by HRDs. In addition, PBI organized a round table between CSOs and the Mexican State to protect community human rights defenders, PBI Mexico, September 26, 2013; available at: http://bit.ly/NzZxTB


17 The joint public letter from OMCT and FIDH is available (in Spanish only) at: http://bit.ly/MADICN

18 The RFK Center’s letter is available at: http://bit.ly/1bTmWb1

19 The joint public letter from OMCT and FIDH is available (in Spanish only) at: http://bit.ly/MADICN


State advances in institutional processes, but challenges remain

In 2013, the Diagnosis of Human Rights in Oaxaca (Diagnóstico de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Oaxaca) was published, which had included the participation of CSOs, representatives of academic institutions, and the three state branches, and was advised by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. This worked toward the objective of identifying human rights issues and suggesting actions to overcome them.

Civil society organizations recognized that judicial and legislative progress was made in 2013, with the passing of the law that created the Truth Commission to investigate the human rights violations committed in Oaxaca in 2006 and 2007. In addition, the Constitutional Court of the High Court of Justice (Salta de la Con- stitucional del Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado) was established, an organ which can require which sanc- tions to public entities that have failed to comply with the Truth Commission’s issue of them. The Human Rights Ombudsman for the People of Oaxaca (Defensoria de Derechos Humanos del Pueblo de Oaxaca, DHDOO) the implementation of these institutions is a response to years of PBI advocacy work. In regard to the Office for the Investigation of Transcendental Social Crimes (Comisión Especial de Investigación de Crímenes Transcendentes, FIDTS), the Office for Attention to Migrants (Fiscalía de Atención Migrantes), and the DDH- PO, PBI has continued to insist that they be strengthened. The DDHPO has now a larger budget and increased staff, yet all of these institutions continue to operate with insufficient resources20. As in 2013, PBI will continue to lobby the Government of Oaxaca so that its extant institutions improve the protection and promotion of human rights in Oaxaca.
Making space for human rights defenders in the north of Mexico

With the conclusion of the exploratory mission in 2012, and the decision to open a new field team in the country’s north, PBI Mexico focused on beginning accompa-

nied work in the states of Chihuahua and Coahuila in 2013. Both states have been identified as among the most dan-
gerous for the defense of human rights21. PBI has documented attacks, threats, ha-
rassment, surveillance, physical aggres-
sion, and criminalization against human rights defenders (HRDs) as a result of their work. In only two years, five women activists were murdered in Chihuahua and another 12 left the country because of death threats22.

Even before opening the new Northern Team in 2013, several months was spent on a series of activities with HRDs in both states. In March, PBI visited Chihuahua, met with HRDs, and was present at an event orga-
nized by the Center for the Human Rights of Women (Centro de Derechos Huma-
nos de las Mujeres, Cedehm) to mark International Women’s Day. Men and wom-
en HRDs at the event remembered the gender-based violence experienced in the state, and demanded that the authorities provide justice for the victims. During the visit, PBI lobbied state-level authorities on the security situation of HRDs and the need to provide them with recognition and protection. In Ciudad Juárez, PBI at-

tended the forum “Torture and Human Rights,” and reiterated his commitment to pro-

viding adequate protection for this group.23 PBI also held meetings with other govern-
ment representatives in Coahuila.

In a tour to Coahuila in April, PBI was pre-
sent at the discussion table between fa-
milies in United Forces for Our Disappea-
red in Coahuila (FUUNDEC), other CSOs, and state and federal authorities. These discussion tables allow the relatives and HRDs to hear from the authorities on the progress made and challenges faced in seeking those who have been forcibly dis-
sappeared, and gives them the opportu-
nity to demand public policy and legisla-
tion that will respond to this devastating phenomenon. PBI team members visited the Satillo Migrant House, where they were able to hear the stories of migrants crossing Mexico on their way to the Uni-
ted States. In addition, PBI observed a meeting regarding the implementation of the House’s precautionary measures between relevant authorities and House members.

As part of its work to promote the recog-
nition of the work of human rights defen-
ders by state governments, PBI met with the governor of Coahuila, Rubén Moreira Valdés24. In this meeting, the governor “recognized that human rights defenders face particular risks because of their work, and reitred his commitment to pro-
viding adequate protection for this group.”25 PBI also held meetings with other govern-
ment representatives in Coahuila.

After several months of preparation, the Northern Team began work in Chihuahua City in August. That same month, PBI signed its first accompaniment agree-
ment in the north of Mexico, with the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center, an organization in Ciudad Juárez dedicated to the defense of victims of torture and forced disappearance26.

Launch of the Northern Team and facilitation of spaces for dia-
logue

On October 1, PBI officially launched its Northern Team with an event in Chihuahua City, attended by numerous local and national CSOs, as well as the head of the Unit for the Promotion and De-
defense of Human Rights of the Interior Ministry (Unidad para la Promoción y De-
defensa de los Derechos Humanos de la Secretaría de Gobernanza, SEGOB), the Embassies of Canada, Holland, Norway, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States, the political advisor of the European Union Delegation to Mexico, and the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico (OHCHR)27.

During the event, E.U. representative Amador Sánchez Rico mentioned “the bloodcurdling testimonies” he had heard, and reiterated the delegation’s support for Mexican civil society. At the same time, the OHCHR representative, Javier Hernández Velazquez, highlighted the im-
portance of hearing the personal stories of each human rights defender.

The HRDs were able to talk with the head of the SEGOB Human Rights Unit, Juan Carlos Gutiérrez, who also met with Ce-
dehm and organized a dis-
cussion table in regard to the organization’s precautionary measures. In his speech at the event, Gutiérrez said, “the obligation of the Mexi-
can State is one and absolu-
to: to protect human rights defenders. Good will alone de-
not protect human rights defenders; it also re-
quires concrete precautionary measures by authorities at federal and state level.”28

That same day, PBI facilitated a discussion table between organizations from Chihuahua and Coahuila and the em-
bassy representatives who attended the event. They were able to give their analysis of the political context, the difficulties they face as human rights defenders, and their demands. After the meeting, the Canadian Embassy met with the organization El Barzón, and visited the area affected by the establishment of a coal-mining zone.29

With the work completed in 2013, PBI has begun to fulfill its aims of opening political spaces for HRDs in the region, making their work and their risks visible, and crea-
ng and strengthening support and solidarity networks at a local, national and international level. In 2014, PBI will continue to expand its work and its presence in Chi-
huahua and Coahuila by signing accompaniment agreements with the Fray Juan de Laros Dioce-
san Center for Human Rights, the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center, and the Satillo Migrant House, all from Coahuila. PBI will also provide accompaniment to the Pasta de Conchos Family Or-
ganization (Organización Familia Pasta de Conchos), which fights for the labor rights of mining workers in the coal-mining zone.

2014 will be a year of consolidation for the Northern Team, and a continuation of the work which began with the first visits to Chihuahua and Coahuila in 2012 as part of the exploratory mission.

26 More information on the organizations accompanied in Coahuila is available at http://bit.ly/3e8P4St.
28 Launch of the Northern Team and facilitation of spaces for dialogue

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Ensuring international support for HRDs

PBI achieved greater visibility for the work of dozens of HRDs from various Mexican states through the publication of “A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Mexico: Initiatives and Risks of Mexican Civil Society”30. To launch the document, PBI organized an international event attended by representatives of civil society, Mexican authorities, the diplomatic corps, and the UN. The event was attended by organizations from Chihuahua, Coahuila, Oaxaca, Guererro, Puebla, Mexico State, and Baja California. Several foreign delegations participated, such as the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores), the Federal Attorney General’s Office, and the National Security Council (Consejo Nacional de Seguridad). The Mexican Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were also present. Representatives of the Canadian, Colombian, Finnish, French, German, Irish, Norwegian, Spanish, Swiss, and US Embassies attended, as did the EU Delegation.

During the gathering, the men and women HRDs were able to make recommendations to the authorities and diplomatic corps, as well as to the international organizations to which they were affiliated. As a result of this meeting, the authorities made the commitment to increase participation in dialogue, and the Viceministry of Judicial Matters and Human Rights (Subsecretaría de Asuntos Jurídicos y Derechos Humanos) to conduct a national campaign in recognition of HRDs. The diplomatic corps developed steps to improve their commitment, some of which are described below.

To increase understanding of the situation of HRDs in Mexico, PBI also improved its communication tools. In 2013, it extended its use of social networks, gaining more followers on Twitter and Facebook. The monthly informational newsletter now reach a larger number of actors. The content of the Web site was also updated, particularly with the new section on Mexico’s north. In addition, the Project launched the video Invocar!. (Get Involved!), which details PBI’s work to promote the defense of human rights in Mexico. The video was launched at a breakfast with embassies and international foundations, and the event also served to inform them of the obstacles to defending human rights in the states of Oaxaca, Chihuahua and Coahuila. Ensuring that HRDs are taken into account

PBI lobbied strongly that the need to protect HRDs should be a central issue in Mexico’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in October. Through a briefing on the importance of the upcoming meeting with members of foreign government (26 with embassies based in Mexico City, and 24 with Foreign Affairs Ministries or their permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva), PBI informed the delegates of the specific situation and the obstacles faced by Mexican HRDs, as well as proposals of how to address the specific situation and recognition. With the desire to encourage participation of and consultations with representatives of European governments, PBI facilitated meetings between representatives of European governments and Mexican authorities. On the fourth day of the meeting organized in 2013 (for Alba Cruz and Alina García) achieved this aim. In June, the representatives of the Mexican civil society delegation to Europe, representing 33 organizations and networks,

Ines Fernandez Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cortijo © Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

Worrying wave of violence against HRDs

An increase in self-defense initiatives was witnessed across the state in 2013. The cases of Inés Fernández and Valentína are finally close for their rights, many of them were arrested in 2002 were arrested. After 12 years of fighting for their release, they are accompanied by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center (Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan, the victim who won the establishment of the Trust for Compliance with Human Rights Obligations (Fideicomiso para el Cumplimiento de Obligaciones en Mate- na de los Derechos Humanos) to receive the compensation payments dictated by the Court, and that would benefit all the victims whose cases were heard in the Inter-American Human Rights System. But above all, in the last days of 2013, four Mexican servicemen were killed in the line of duty in this Inter-American Human Rights System.

Ines Fernandez Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cortijo © Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

by Tlachinollan and supported by dozens of Mexican CSOs36. In December, several organizations sent a public letter to the go- vernor demanding his intervention to the context of violence against HRDs and legal punish- ment for those responsible37.

PBI continues to support the de- fense of human rights in Guerrero.

In July, PBI participated in the XIX an- niversary of Tlachinollan. PBI also held meetings with authorities from Guerrero’s Tlachinollan, in which it urged the classification of torture as a serious crime, and the investigation of crimes committed against HRDs. PBI continues to insist on the application of investigation protocols in violations suffe- red by HRDs, and demand an end to the reigning impunity in these cases.

PBI’s advocacy work throughout 2013 was structured by the arrival of a new federal government in December 2012, which is one of the most dangerous states for the defense of human rights in Mexico38. The reign- ing impunity in cases of attacks against HRDs is in contrast to the current investigation, the implementation of the sentences. In December, the Mexican Human Rights Commission (Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos, CONADEH) also observed the meeting between Fa- ther Alejandro Solalinde, director of the Hermanos en el Camino migrant shelter in Oaxaca, and the Federal Attorney General, Jesús Murillo Karam. During the meeting, Father Solalinde spoke of the tragic situa- tion of migrants crossing Mexico to reach the United States, and the risky situation of those who defend them.

Greater visibility for the defense of human rights in Mexico

PBI achieved greater visibility for the work of dozens of HRDs from various Mexican states through the publication of “A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) in Mexico: Initiatives and Risks of Mexican Civil Society”. To launch the document, PBI organized an international event attended by representatives of civil society, Mexican autho- rities, the diplomatic corps, and the UN. The event was attended by organizations from Chihuahua, Coahuila, Oaxaca, Guererro, Puebla, Mexico State, and Baja California. Several foreign delegations participated, such as the Interior Ministry, the Foreign Affairs Ministry (Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores), the Federal Attorney General’s Office, and the National Security Council (Consejo Nacional de Seguridad). The Mexican Human Rights Commission and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights were also present. Representatives of the Cana- dian, Colombian, Finnish, French, Ger- man, Irish, Norwegian, Spanish, Swiss, and US Embassies attended, as did the EU Delegation.

During the gathering, the men and women HRDs were able to make recommendations to the authorities and diplomatic corps, as well as to the international organizations to which they were affiliated. As a result of this meeting, the authorities made the commitment to increase participation in dialogue, and the Viceministry of Judicial Matters and Human Rights (Subsecretaría de Asuntos Jurídicos y Derechos Humanos) to conduct a national campaign in recognition of HRDs. The diplomatic corps developed steps to improve their commitment, some of which are described below.

To increase understanding of the situa- tion of HRDs in Mexico, PBI also improved its communication tools. In 2013, it extended its use of social networks, gaining more followers on Twitter and Facebook. The monthly informational newsletter now reach a larger number of actors. The content of the Web site was also updated, particularly with the new section on Mexico’s north. In addition, the Project launched the video Invocar!. (Get In- volved!), which details PBI’s work to promote the defense of human rights in Mexico. The video was launched at a breakfast with embassies and internatio- nal foundations, and the event also served to inform them of the obstacles to defending human rights in the states of Oaxaca, Chihuahua and Coahuila.

Ensuring that HRDs are taken into account

PBI lobbied strongly that the need to protect HRDs should be a central issue in Mexico’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in October. Through a briefing on the importance of the upcoming meeting with members of foreign government (26 with embassies based in Mexico City, and 24 with Foreign Affairs Ministries or their permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva), PBI informed the delegates of the specific situation and the obstacles faced by Mexican HRDs, as well as proposals of how to address the specific situation and recognition. With the desire to encourage participation of and consultations with representatives of European governments, PBI facilitated meetings between representatives of European governments and Mexican authorities. On the fourth day of the meeting organized in 2013 (for Alba Cruz and Alina García) achieved this aim. In June, the representatives of the Mexican civil society delegation to Europe, representing 33 organizations and networks,
which delivered a joint analysis of the human rights situation, as well as proposals to the UN and EU, the need to consult, and requested that the Mexican government strengthen their protection and take measures to avoid attacks against them. Mexico City until March 2014 to accept the recommendations; PBI considers it crucial that the Mexican government adopt and act on the recommendations, in order to support and legitimate HRDs.

The Mexico Project, together with other areas of PBI, lobbied so that HRDs could have an active role in the international debate on the relationship between business and human rights, and for their security situation to be a criterion which guides the European and US foreign policies towards Mexico.

PBI organized five tours to Europe. From Oaxaca, Alba Cruz visited France and London, Sara Méndez went to Geneva, Miguel Ángel Vásquez was in Brussels (see page 5) and PBI also co-organized a visit by Betina Cruz (APIITDTT) to that city. From Chihuahua and Coahuila, Alberto Cisneros and Silvia Grijalva visited Washington, and Alma García conducted a tour of five European countries (see page 5).

In early September, PBI took note of a serious deterioration in the security situation of the men and women human rights defenders in Oaxaca. Death threats, arbitrary detentions, and raids had been documented against Código-DH and the Human Rights Organizations (HRDs) they accompanied on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In addition, a generalized context of violence against HRDs “Bozques”. Human rights defenders, the Working Group on business and human rights, and parallel organizations (HRDs) acompanhied by PBI, as well as the collective United Forces for Our Discounted in Coahuila (FUJOONEC). In October, the Canadian, Dutch, Norwegian, Swiss, UK, and US Embassies, as well as the EU Delegation, met in Chihuahua City with HRDs from Chihuahua and Coahuila to listen to their situation and proposals, in a meeting promoted by PBI.

Key embassies also organized meetings in Mexico City with HRDs accompanied by PBI: Canada, the United States, and Switzerland in June; France in July; and the United States once again in December. These meetings were reported on the embassies’ official Web sites. Beyond the evident legitimizing and attention-bringing effect of these meetings, some embassies’ officials stated that the action of HRDs in the protection of human rights and the Mexican government, which is in negotiation with the EU, is an example of how an activation of PBI’s support network operates. These measures were fast tracked. In November, the Oaxacan governor, together with high-level public sponsors, responded positively to PBI’s proposal that they meet with various Oaxacan HRDs. In addition to affirming their commitment to the protection of human rights defenders in that meeting, the authorities made a commitment to publicly recognize, via a declaration, the importance of HRDs in Oaxaca; to share the protection protocols for HRDs they had been working on in the current administration; and to report on how they were coordinating with the federal government in order to implement the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in Oaxaca. To provide follow-up on these agreements, a second meeting was agreed on for January 2014. For Código-DH and Barca-DH, their level of risk decreased. Although security incidents continue to be noted, their gravity has been reduced. The situation for the community HRDs of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec continues to be worrying, and PBI will continue to monitor the situation and keep our support network informed of their findings.
For PBI, it is essential to ensure the sustainability of our work with medium- and long-term strategies. We bank on both the dialogue with the government, and the support of local organizations in the development of public policies (such as the Protection Mechanism), as well as the strengthening of organizations through training processes – such as our Security Training Program. Based on the increase in requests for accompaniment since 2011, we have strengthened the consultancy program to better address the protection needs of a broader range of human rights defenders (HRDs) and their organizations. In addition, based on the feedback received from organizations and our experience of the security program, PBI has decided to move forward with a second program (focused on advocacy), whose pilot project design was undertaken in the second half of 2013.

Consultancies in security, protection, and advocacy

The pilot project for advocacy support has been formulated as a response to the needs and concerns shared with PBI by the organizations in nine Mexican states. They expressed the need to better advocate and dialogue with the Mexican authorities, and that a better network of national – and international – contacts would be a significant pillar in improving their security, improving their access to and treatment by Mexican authorities, and increase the effectiveness of their political and advocacy work to support the victims of human rights violations.

The execution of the pilot project should culminate in 2014 with an Advocacy Training Program which would seek to empower organizations in the development of more efficient advocacy strategies in their areas of interest, and in the autonomous management of a strong support network in Mexico and abroad, with members who could make contributions in terms of political, technical, and protective support. We are yet in the initial stages, but we have already achieved the bases for a coordinated advocacy strategy, and shared relevant contacts between PBI and one new organization in northern Mexico.

In relation to the now-consolidated Security Training Program, PBI aims to contribute to better security and protection management for HRDs by transmitting tools and sharing experiences that strengthen both their analysis as well as the definition of strategies and procedures for security and protection.

One important element is that these programs allow PBI to support and endorse a greater number of organizations, even in states where no team is based. In 2013, for example, PBI was able to provide training and strengthening to 43 organizations in 14 Mexican states (Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guanajuato, Hidalgo, Mexico, Oaxaca, Puebla, Querétaro, Tlaxcala, Veracruz, Yucatán, Zacatecas, and Sonora). As mentioned earlier, it is not only the organizations accompanied by PBI which benefit from these consultancies. In 2013, some of the immediate results were a case which was going to set aside, was instead reestablished with appropriate security measures; protocols and steps for devising for public protests; two processes establishing emergency response systems were coordinated among different organizations, etc. 39

Despite these successes, the number of attacks against HRDs, and the number of requests for consultancies (in security and advocacy) show that the challenges continue to be great. PBI is convinced that both programs can have an important role in the strengthening and protection of human rights defenders in Mexico.

One year on from the creation of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists

Established in November 2012, the first steps towards the Protection Mechanism’s implementation became effective in 2013, the year in which both the law and the mechanism celebrated their first anniversaries (in June and November, respectively).

To celebrate the one-year anniversary of the Law, in June 2013 CSOs (of the CSO Group – Civil Society Organizations Group, Espacio OC) delivered to the Interior Ministry an analysis of the law’s implementation, and published a letter in which they made three specific requests: for public recognition by the Interior Minister for the risks faced by activists and journalists; that it ensure that the Protection Mechanism receive the necessary institutional support from the highest levels of government; and for the establishment of the Fund’s Technical Committee and the recruitment of staff required for its functioning (including the creation of the Unit for Prevention, Follow-up and Analysis – Unidad de Prevención, Seguimiento y Análisis). At the same time, PBI interviewed the head of the Unit for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights of the Interior Ministry, Juan Carlos Gutiérrez, 41 on the issue, and, together with other international organizations, published a letter supporting the requests of Mexican civil society.

During 2013, PBI continued both its accompaniment of the CSO Group, as well as dialogue with the government, diplomatic corps, organizations, and international bodies. 42 PBI also observed the meetings which were held monthly between the CSO Group and the Protection Mechanism, to be party to the contextual analysis presented, and to maintain our support network informed on the progress and challenges to its implementation.

PBI believes that the Protection Mechanism represents a crucial opportunity to provide effective protection to human rights defenders in Mexico. One year after its creation, some stages have been completed: the Consultative Council (Consejo Consultivo) met the Interior Minister, who promised to follow up the issue and take civil society’s concerns to other government bodies; the positions associated with the Protection Mechanism were filled; and the Fund’s Technical Committee was founded. However, among the obstacles noted by HRDs are the weakness of the risk analyses and the time taken before they are presented, and the lack of effective coordination between the different government bodies, particularly with the states where the HRDs and journalists live. Finally, despite the establishment and allocation of moneys to the Fund, the funds themselves cannot be accessed. The demands and attention of the international community are essential for the Protection Mechanism’s adequate implementation.

40 The full interview is available at: http://bit.ly/1TaTAAe.
41 Further information on the activities associated with this one-year anniversary can be found at: http://bit.ly/1TaTAAe.
42 At the request of both CSOs and the Mexican government, PBI has been accompanying the process of establishing the Protection Mechanism since 2008. To learn more about the process, watch PBI’s video “The Duty to Protect”, available at: http://bit.ly/1S7QFAK.
43 See also p.15 of this Annual Report for more information on recommendations related to the Protection Mechanism which were issued as part of Mexico’s Universal Periodic Review (UPR) before the United Nations Human Rights Council.
“It was an experience which I’ll take with me for the rest of my life”

I work in the Tactical Technology Collective, an organization which works at the intersection between digital information and human rights defense. I give workshops on digital security for HRDs, research and write training materials, and collaborate with organizations that work more broadly in the protection of human rights defenders. I travel the world giving workshops and doing research. When I began to work with them, [the Collective] were very interested in my field experience, and in my grassroots work with at-risk individuals and communities. My time in PBI gave me a close relationship with HRDs, with their work, their security situation, and the effect that has on them. PBI taught me to be more realistic in what to expect, and in how to plan my work with HRDs. An intimate understanding of the context of being a human rights defender is a unique gift in PBI’s work. In a PBI team you also have a security perspective, as we also experience some of the same problems as the HRDs we accompany. All of that has been very helpful in my current work.

How have you kept in contact with PBI since you left?

I’ve stayed in contact with my teammates who have continued to work in human rights, and I also collaborate with PBI when I can, like when they were in Berlin for activities, and on digital security issues. I’m committed to the PBI’s success, and to the protection of HRDs; I want to maintain professional links with PBI because of the work they do. I know it is not easy to offer protection to people at risk, so it is natural to stay in touch and collaborate. Every time I come across something relevant, I think of PBI and how we can involve them.

Do you miss anything from your life in PBI?

Sharing lives and experiences with other people, the sense of working because you’re doing something that matters to you. Every day you get up for something, you know you’re living for something important. Also the sense of solidarity, the close contact with the HRDs, watching their work develop, sharing their difficult times and their fears when they receive threats, but also their successes, large and small; being able to share their emotions, that’s what PBI accommodation is. You also share your life with your teammates; it’s a very special relationship that you develop with those people. I miss all of that.

What did you take with you from PBI?

My grassroots orientation. I feel very humble when I go to work with HRDs in other countries, be they Thailand or Brazil: my orientation is always one of service to the HRDs I work with. It’s not something I learnt only in PBI, but PBI gives you a very strong sense of service. I have a very strong respect for the fieldwork PBI does, and I still feel reverence for the work of human rights defenders. I always want to see myself as a human rights defender, and not as a professional who arrives in a country to tell people how to do things. Also with my teammates in PBI: you share powerful experiences together, so it was natural for me to stay in touch with them. You leave with friends for life.

Daniel O Clunaigh was a volunteer in PBI Mexico’s Oaxaca Team in 2011-2012. Since he left the Project, he has lived in Berlin, where he works for the organization Tactical Technology Collective. His PBI experience has allowed him to continue working to defend human rights in different parts of the world. Daniel tells us about his time in PBI and what it has meant for him.

What was your experience as a volunteer with PBI?

Intense, both in terms of the commitment and the contact with human rights defenders (HRDs) and with the team. It was an experience which I’ll take with me for the rest of my life. I know I’ll never live through another experience like it, to have a job just because it matters to you.

What have you worked in since you left PBI? What has your PBI experience meant in your professional life?

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PBI Mexico thanks all its donors for their financial support, which allowed us to carry out all activities planned for 2013. Income planning continues to be a challenge for PBI, given the large number of donors and their wide variety of requisites, processes and schedules. Because of the rules which many donors are themselves subject to, it seems difficult to have programs that can be planned and approved with sufficient lead time, and with a projected period which operates within the current year. In practice, we receive the approvals of many donors too late (in some cases, 2013 funds were approved in November and December of that year). The uncertainty, combined with the confirmation dates for the Project’s income, lead to a situation in which PBI Mexico is obliged to strictly limit its expenditure. All of these factors, combined with the favorable increase in exchange rates over the course of the year, explain why PBI Mexico ended 2013 with a budgetary surplus. As in previous years, the surplus will be used to establish a reserve to cover three months of the Project’s operating budget. Such reserves are considered good financial practice in not-for-profit organizations, and form part of the financial norms set by PBI’s international office.

The financial data in this report is provisional, and will be subject to an audit. All income and expenditure figures are given in US dollars.

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<td>Solidarity International</td>
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<td>UNITED KINGDOM</td>
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<td>PBI UK</td>
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<td>Sigrid Rausing Trust</td>
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<td>UNITED STATES</td>
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<td>OTHER FUNDS</td>
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<td>Other programs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal donations</td>
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<td>TOTAL INCOME</td>
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Peace Brigades International (PBI) is a nongovernmental organization with 30 years of experience in international accompaniment and has been present in Mexico since 1999. PBI's goal is to protect the political space for people and organizations that promote human rights in a non-violent manner, and who suffer repression for their legitimate work.

PBI only works at the request of local organizations and does not replace efforts by Mexican human rights defenders to promote respect for human rights. Rather, it merely seeks to support their initiatives by standing next to them.

PBI regularly visits conflict areas, distributes information, and dialogues with civil and military authorities, as well as with human rights organizations and other civil society actors in Mexico. To promote international attention to the Mexican situation, and to help create the necessary conditions for human rights defenders to continue with their work, PBI also maintains a dialogue with the international community and international organizations such as the United Nations, disseminates information, and generates support from abroad in order to ensure the safety of Mexican defenders.

More information about PBI's work in Mexico can be found on our Web site: www.pbi-mexico.org