



PEACE BRIGADES  
INTERNATIONAL  
MEXICO PROJECT



# Annual Report 2013

PBI Mexico, February 2014

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Oaxaca Team volunteer at the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, at the International Megaprojects Seminar on Energy and Indigenous Territory "The Isthmus at the Crossroads" © PBI Mexico

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# “Listen, share, support”

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 (OHCHR) and Urgent Action for Human Rights Defenders (*Acción Urgente para los Defensores de los Derechos Humanos*, ACUDDEH), demonstrate that the states where PBI operates – especially Chihuahua and Oaxaca – are among the most dangerous in Mexico for HRDs<sup>1</sup>.

Adapting to the context and the stated needs of local organizations motivated PBI to facilitate 12 events and spaces where HRDs had the opportunity to dialogue among their peers, with government authorities and/or with the diplomatic corps. This role of facilitating dialogue between key actors is only possible thanks to the openness of those actors and their trust in the work of PBI. PBI appreciates this trust, and maintains the objective of transferring the facilitation role to local organizations.

Local organizations expressed the need for training in political advocacy, and PBI began designing a program of consultations focusing on advocacy and building support networks. This new tool reflects PBI's mandate to share strategies that can empower local civil society actors, and broaden their “space” for action. The program will be stepped up in 2014 to allow more HRDs to benefit.



**Event to celebrate the launch of the new Northern Team in Chihuahua, October 2013  
© José Luis Manzo**

2013 also saw the rise of the campaign *¡Defendamos la Esperanza!* (Let's Defend Hope!), which promotes the work of human rights defenders across Mexico. The campaign is an initiative of the “All Rights for All” Network (Red “Todos los Derechos para Todas y Todos”, Red TDT), a national network of CSOs<sup>2</sup>. 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 all the institutions and individuals who supported our work in Mexico in 2013. PBI Mexico hopes to continue counting on your support.

Happy reading!

<sup>1</sup> OHCHR, Informe sobre la situación de las y los defensores de derechos humanos en México: Actualización 2012 y balance 2013, Mexico, June 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1diQXAr>; and ACUDDEH, Defender los derechos humanos en México: El costo de la dignidad, junio de 2012 a mayo de 2013, Mexico, July 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1jL3vmY>

<sup>2</sup> Further information on the campaign (in Spanish) is available at: <http://bit.ly/HKl2gx>

# 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 total of more than 70,000 deaths related to "the war against organized crime", 26,000 people disappeared, a crisis of (in)security, 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 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 their presence in police work and provide a legal framework which will legitimate [the security forces'] fighting in the streets against organized crime"<sup>3</sup>. There is a notable discrepancy between promises made and current facts, as noted in the documented statistics. According to independent sources, the first 11 months of Peña Nieto's mandate saw more than 19,000 executions<sup>4</sup>, higher figures than those of the Calderón administration.

The new federal government has focused its national and international messages on economic growth and energy sector reform, rather than violence and drug trafficking. With this strategy, the government has achieved a strong reduction in media coverage of the continuing violence. This does not reflect an improvement in the security situation, whose situation is instead illustrated by the increase in self-defense groups in various Mexican states.

It is possible to note legal and institutional progress. The Federal Executive Branch promulgated the General Victims' Law, the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists (*Mecanismo de Protección para Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas*) was strengthened, and the Specialized Search

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<sup>5</sup>, and the federal

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<sup>6</sup>. Because of this occurrence, the Inter-American



Protest held on October 2 in Mexico City © Fernando Santillán González / CENCOS

government made positive steps towards compliance with sentences handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR) (see page 10).

However, Human Rights Watch<sup>6</sup> and Amnesty International<sup>7</sup> 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<sup>8</sup>.

Court of Human Rights expressed its concern, and more than one hundred civil society organizations and seven networks condemned the situation<sup>10</sup>. In December, CSOs pointed out that the Law of Public Protests in the Federal District (*Ley de 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"<sup>11</sup>.

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.

3 Carrasco Araizaga, Jorge. "Más poderío, dinero e impunidad para el Ejército," *Proceso*, January 5, 2014, no. 1940, p.12. Translation: PBI.

4 "Peña Nieto: 11 meses, 19,016 [sic] muertos," *Sin Embargo*, December 10, 2013. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1idR0jo>

5 "Mensaje del Presidente de la República, Enrique Peña Nieto, con motivo de la celebración del Día de los Derechos Humanos," Presidencia de la República, December 10, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1dKptTi>

6 "Mexico: President's disappointing first year on human rights," Human Rights Watch, November 26, 2013; available at <http://bit.ly/1dhD86X>

7 "Un año perdido para los derechos humanos en México," Amnesty International Mexico, November 29, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1arh047>

8 OHCHR, 2013; ACUDDEH, 2013; see footnote 1.

9 "El Comité Cerezo pide justicia para los detenidos del 2 de octubre," Comité Cerezo México, January 18, 2014; available at: <http://bit.ly/Ktjox8>

10 "Pronunciamiento de OSC: Reprimir es un delito, expresarse una libertad," Serapaz, October 15, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1flSp15>. Translation: PBI.

11 "Legislators target social protest in Mexico City," Centro Prodh, December 9 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1m4hqJc>

# Building solidarity networks

*"For me, the work you have done is very important, because it reflects the fact that human beings can complement each other from our own separate groups."*

In 2013, the Mexican government recognized the existence of more than 26,000 disappeared people across the country. This figure reveals a true humanitarian crisis. United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (*Fuerzas Unidas por Nuestros Desaparecidos en Coahuila*, FUUNDEC), a collective of family members of the forcibly disappeared, has documented – in the state of Coahuila alone – more than 300 disappearances in recent years, most of them young men.

To expose the seriousness of Mexico's situation, PBI invited Alma García, participant in FUUNDEC and member of the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights (*Centro Diocesano para los Derechos Humanos Fray Juan de Larios*) to participate in a European tour. Alma was able to meet with a broad array of actors, among them international organizations, United Nations (UN) bodies, Ministries of Foreign Affairs, lawyers' groups, local governments, academic institutions and the general public. Alma visited five countries – Switzerland, Spain, France, Holland and Germany – in 20 days, gave 13 press interviews, and participated in seven events and 26 meetings. Alma represented not only the two organizations named above, but also the Saltillo Migrant House (*Casa del Migrante Saltillo*) and the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center (*Centro de Derechos Humanos Juan Gerardi*). Some international civil society organizations used Alma's contributions to redefine their strategy in Mexico, giving more attention to the country's north and the issue of forced disappearances.

For Alma, 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 context for men and women human rights defenders (HRDs) in Mexico and particularly in Coahuila. In a letter sent to PBI, Alma highlights "the little touches" and the people who surrounded her, making her European experience that much warmer:

*Esteemed and dear PBI colleagues,*

*Well, I'd like to thank all of you, men and women, for your work and effort in organizing the activities on the tour; each person with their distinct manner, time and philosophy, all with great willingness. For me, the work you have done is very important, because it reflects the fact that human beings can complement each other from our own separate groups.*

*I'd also like to share with you that this tour came at a time in my life when I was feeling buried by routine, and when you travel to another place you notice so many colors, languages, and thoughts that are the same or different. You also see what is happening in other countries, in other forms but with the same underlying themes – like migration. You see people like you, who are all volunteers, who get up early, [...] who prepared the publicity and promoted the events, who hung off the telephone to book dates, who invited your families to the events, who got stressed and worried about the small details like the interpreting, or that I wouldn't miss my train or plane, who offered me somewhere to sleep, etc., etc.*

*All of you deserve my acknowledgment, because I know you're acting from your hearts with all the men and women human rights defenders you invite on a tour. And also, because of your aim to help make our situation – and its difficulties – visible, in my case it has nourished my little heart. I feel I'm accompanied from many parts of the world, and it makes me feel strong.*

*I send you all a hug, and I remember you with great warmth,*

*Alma*

Some months after Alma's tour, a video jointly produced by PBI and FUUNDEC was shown in London during an event on disappearance in Mexico, which was organized by the Solicitors International Human Rights Group (SIHRG)<sup>12</sup>. Alma's interview was recorded during her time in Europe. SIHRG made a commitment to send letters of support to Fray Juan de Larios and FUUNDEC in case of emergency.

The international tours facilitated by PBI

have a strong impact for the HRDs who leave Mexico to seek solidarity and support in other countries. In April 2013, for example, PBI took Silvia Grijalva, from the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center (*Centro de Derechos Humanos Paso del Norte*), and Alberto Xicoténcatl, from the Saltillo Migrant House, on a visit to Washington, to highlight their situation as HRDs and to inform political actors about issues of torture and violations against migrants. They established contact with 114 people during the tour, and met with local CSOs, congressmen and –women, representatives of the US Department of State, lawyers' groups and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights. In addition, the two HRDs participated in a public event focused on the situation of HRDs in Mexico, particularly in the states of Coahuila and Chihuahua.



**Alma García (second from the right) with members of PBI Germany © PBI Germany**

One positive outcome of the tour was the Dear Colleague Letter<sup>13</sup>, 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.

<sup>12</sup> The video is available at: <http://bit.ly/1fegER5>

<sup>13</sup> The letter is available at: <http://1.usa.gov/1dznXBp>

# High risk involved in defending communities

In 2013, Oaxaca was shown to be the most dangerous Mexican state in which to defend human rights<sup>14</sup>. Attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) continue, and human rights organizations, like the Committee for the Integral Defense for Human Rights Gobixha (*Comité de Defensa Integral de Derechos Humanos Gobixha*, Código-DH) and the Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño Regional Human Rights Center (*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 (*Centro 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 the first meeting, we shared our concerns 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 governor, the heads of various government entities, and representatives of civil society, in order to promote action that would increase the protection of human rights defenders. The organizations handed the governor a letter of requests, asking for a public declaration recognizing HRDs. PBI values the openness of Oaxaca's current government in meeting with CSOs, and hopes that this space for dialogue can be maintained and increased in 2014.

In March, PBI facilitated a round table between the US ambassador to Mexico and CSOs, where the latter explained their work in defense of human rights and the risks they face as a consequence. The first secretary of the Canadian

Embassy and the Dutch ambassador visited 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 governor, and expressed the concerns they had heard from the CSOs. They also urged the strengthening of Oaxaca's human rights institutions, which was a specific request from PBI. In December, a delegation from the embassies of Germany, Norway and Switzerland conducted a tour to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec with PBI's accompaniment. During the visit, organized by Código-DH, the embassy representatives met with the Public Assembly of the People of Juchitán and collected information on the conflicts resulting from the construction of megaprojects 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 coordination spaces on security and protection for HRDs. They worked on formulas to express civil society's requests to the Mexican State to guarantee their protection, emphasizing that recognition of HRDs' work should be a protection tool and guiding focus. In 2013, PBI continued to promote shared spaces of coordination 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 Europe at the invitation of the Paris Bar Association. 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 lobby, together with other actors, for the

UN resolution against the criminalization of HRDs, which was passed that same month.

In December, two HRDs conducted activities in Europe with PBI's support. Miguel Ángel Vásquez, of Services for an Alternative Education (*Servicios para una Educación Alternativa*, EDUCA), participated in the 15th EU-NGO Forum on Human Rights in Brussels, and met with



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

diplomatic representatives and Members of European Parliament (MEPs). The tour was very useful in terms of building an international support network for EDUCA, and allowed 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 government to participate in the launch of their 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 Sekaggya, the human rights defenders who address environmental and land issues are among those at greatest risk of rights violations. At the same time, Sekaggya

<sup>14</sup> OHCHR, 2013; ACUDDEH, 2013; see footnote 1.

noted that Mexico was one of the countries to which she had issued the highest number of communications in response to attacks reported against community HRDs<sup>15</sup>.

On the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, wind farms have faced the resistance of the communities and indigenous people who have united in the public assemblies. The community HRDs have demanded their right to self-determination, and to choose their own, inclusive development model. Members of the Assembly of Indigenous People of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Defense of Land and Territory (*Asamblea de Pueblos Indígenas del Istmo de Tehuantepec en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio, APIITDT*) have reported acts of aggression by State and non-State actors. In June 2013, Héctor Regalado – an opponent of the wind farm Bii Hioxho – was murdered. Also particularly worrying are the accusations of violence leveled at the Auxiliary Bank, Industrial and Commercial Police (*Policía Auxiliar, Bancaria, Industrial y Comercial, PABC*)<sup>16</sup>, a branch of the Oaxacan police force which also offers private security services to some companies operating in the Isthmus.

Because of this context of violent, PBI activated its support network and achieved positive results. The World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), the FIDH<sup>17</sup> and the Robert F Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights<sup>18</sup> made pronouncements, urging President Peña Nieto and Governor Gabino Cué to take immediate action for the protection of men and women community HRDs. Member of European Parliament Willy Meyer asked a question in parliament as to how the European Union (EU) Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders could be implemented in regard to HRDs in Oaxaca, and US Congressman Sam Farr expressed his concern for the situation to the Department of State, and received a reply highlighting the United States' commitment to human rights.

This increase in harassment and risk led PBI, in August 2013, to call a gathering of various civil society organizations who work on the issue of "business and human rights," in order to help them define a strategy and create spaces for community HRDs to take action.

In line with these concerns, PBI began to accompany EDUCA, an organization which offers guidance to indigenous organizations and communities about defending their rights. PBI conducted the first accompaniment to the Regional Forum on Mining and its Impacts in Indigenous Communities in Magdalena Teitipac. EDUCA, as part of its work to make community processes visible, accompanies community HRDs in legitimate 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<sup>19</sup>. PBI had nominated Código-DH for the "Gilberto Bosques" Human Rights Prize, and had written letters of support. Both embassies made public declarations recognizing the vulnerability and special need for protection of community HRDs in Oaxaca.

Because of their high level of risk, various human rights defenders now have precautionary measures. PBI's participation helped reopen discussions between Father Alejandro Solalinde and Mexican authorities in regard to his protective measures. Following the data theft experienced by Nora Martínez of Barca-DH, Nora had some protection measures effectively implemented, an outcome PBI had lobbied for with the government of Oaxaca. Local authorities have also given more follow-up to Alba Cruz's measures, after months of dialogue with PBI. In September, following PBI's activation on the recent wave of attacks, the Oaxacan Public Security Ministry (*Secretaría de Seguridad Pública, SSP*) explained the actions it was taking to protect HRDs. The activation also resulted in a working group between the Government of Oaxaca and the Interior Ministry (*Secretaría de Gobernación, SEGOB*), in which they

considered the cases and violations outlined in PBI's letter.

### **State advances in institutional structures, but challenges remain**

In 2013, the Diagnosis of Human Rights in the State of Oaxaca (*Diagnóstico de Derechos Humanos del Estado de Oaxaca*) was published, which had included the participation of CSOs (such as Barca-DH), 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 (*Sala de lo Constitucional del Tribunal Superior de Justicia del Estado*) was established, an organ which can issue requirements and sanctions to public entities that have failed to comply with recommendations issued by the Human Rights Ombudsman for the People of Oaxaca (*Defensoría de Derechos Humanos del Pueblo de Oaxaca, DDHPO*). 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 (*Fiscalía de Investigación de Delitos de Trascendencia Social, FIDTS*), the Office for Attention to Migrants (*Fiscalía de Atención al Migrante*), and the DDHPO, PBI has continued to insist that they be strengthened. The DDHPO now has a larger budget and increased staff, yet all of these institutions continue to operate with insufficient resources<sup>20</sup>. 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.

15 UN General Assembly, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, August 5, 2013, pp. 6-8, 14; available at: <http://bit.ly/1g4b1sl>

16 "Oaxaca: Activists opposed to wind-energy denounce new attack from Fenosa Gas Natural," SIPAZ Blog, September 13, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1dhK440>

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 "Franco-German acknowledgment of the work of Alba Cruz and Código-DH; Ambassador calls on the Mexican State to protect community human rights defenders," PBI Mexico, September 26, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/NzZxTB>

20 DDHPO, Primer informe de actividades periodo mayo 2012-2013, Mexico, n.d., pp. 61-62; available in Spanish at: <http://bit.ly/1dbINrl>

# Making space for human rights defenders in the north of Mexico



PBI in Saltillo, accompanying the meeting between families of FUUNDEC and government representatives, in which they discussed conducting searches for those who have been forcibly disappeared © PBI 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 accompaniment work in the states of Chihuahua and Coahuila in 2013. Both states have been identified as among the most dangerous for the defense of human rights<sup>21</sup>. PBI has documented attacks, threats, harassment, surveillance, physical aggression, 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 threats<sup>22</sup>.

Even before opening the new Northern Team, 2013 saw PBI conduct a series of activities with HRDs in both states. In March, PBI visited Chihuahua, met with HRDs, and was present at an event organized by the Center for the Human Rights of Women (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres, Cedehm*) to mark International Women's Day. Men and women 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 attended the forum "Torture and Human Rights in Mexico," co-organized by the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center and other actors.

In a tour to Coahuila in April, PBI was present at the discussion table between families in United Forces for Our Disappeared 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 disappeared, and gives them the opportunity to demand public policy and legislation that will respond to this devastating phenomenon. PBI team members visited the Saltillo Migrant House, where they were able to hear the stories of migrants crossing Mexico on their way to the United 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 recognition of the work of human rights defenders by state governments, PBI met with the governor of Coahuila, Rubén Moreira Valdez<sup>23</sup>. In this meeting, the governor "recognized that human rights defenders face particular risks because of their work,

and reiterated his commitment to provide adequate protection for this group"<sup>24</sup>. PBI also held meetings with other government 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 agreement 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 disappearance<sup>25</sup>.

## Launch of the Northern Team and facilitation of spaces for dialogue

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 Defense of Human Rights of the Interior Ministry (*Unidad para la Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos de la Secretaría de Gobernación, SEGOB*), the Embassies of Canada, Holland, Norway,

21 "New PBI team in the north of Mexico: Trends and patterns of human rights defense in Chihuahua and Coahuila," PBI Mexico, September 2013; available at <http://bit.ly/1eokV35>

22 "Recrudece violencia contra defensoras en Chihuahua," CIMAC Noticias, September 5, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1diwQCF>

23 "PBI meets with Governor of Coahuila; disappearances, migrants, and the safety of human rights defenders amongst the principal concerns," PBI Mexico, April 7, 2013; available at <http://bit.ly/1eOHjZH>

24 "Recibe Gobernador Rubén Moreira a miembros de Brigadas Internacionales de Paz", Gobierno de Coahuila, April 6, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1eFaq8M> Translation: PBI

25 More information on the Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center is available at: <http://bit.ly/1eomgXU>

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)<sup>26</sup>. During the event, the diplomatic corps and government officials could hear directly from local human rights defenders about their situation and suggestions. The event received a high level of media coverage and strong international attention from followers on Livestream and Twitter, as well as exposure on the Web pages of some embassies.

The HRDs were able to talk with the head of the SEGOB Human Rights Unit, Juan Carlos Gutiérrez, who also met with Cede-hm and organized a discussion table in regard to the organization's precautionary measures. In his speech at the event, Gutiérrez said, "the obligation of the Mexican State is one and absolute: to protect human rights defenders. Good will alone does not protect human rights defenders; it also requires concrete protection measures by authorities at federal and state level."

That same day, PBI facilitated a discussion table between organizations from Coahuila and Chihuahua and the embassy representatives who attended the event. The organizations 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 Canadian-owned mine. During the launch, the Canadian ambassador, Sara Hradecky, recognized that "the work of human rights defenders, on all its range of issues, has a positive impact on the life of society in general, strengthening democracy and supporting the establishment of public policies which benefit everyone". The UK Embassy, after speaking with El Barzón, mentioned their case to Chihuahua's Public Prosecutor (*Fiscal General*).

The EU Delegation and some embassies took the topics proposed by the HRDs to

their meetings with high-level local authorities. PBI sees this result as very positive, as well as the one-on-one interactions between the diplomatic corps and local HRDs, such as the working meeting between the EU Delegation and Cede-hm. During the event, EU 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 Valencia, highlighted the importance of hearing the personal stories of each human rights defender.

The HRDs from Chihuahua City, Ciudad Juárez, Saltillo and Torreón also met to jointly plan their contributions to the dis-

hua and Coahuila by international actors thanks to the diplomatic corps' visits promoted by PBI, the media work around the opening of the Northern Team, and the tours of local HRDs to the United States and Europe (see page 5).

Javier Hernández Valencia from OHCHR stated during the event that the dangerous situation experienced by HRDs results from a "lack of effective response by the federal, state and municipal authorities." PBI will continue to inform the authorities of Chihuahua and Coahuila of the legitimacy and importance of the work of HRDs, and hopes that their representatives continue to be open to these interactions.

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 creating 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 Chihuahua and Coahuila by signing accompaniment agreements with the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights, the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center, and the Saltillo Migrant House, all from Coahuila. PBI will also provide accompaniment to the Pasta de Conchos Family Organization (*Organización Familia Pasta de Conchos*), which fights for the labor rights of mining workers in the coal-mining zone<sup>27</sup>.

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.



**Northern Team volunteer speaking with HRD Lucha Castro at a public event in Chihuahua © CEDEHM**

cussion table with the diplomatic corps. For PBI, this represents an important step toward strengthening local HRD networks, one of the Project's objectives in the coming years.

For some representatives of the diplomatic corps at the launch, this was their first visit to Chihuahua. They heard in detail about the defense of human rights in Mexico's north, which increased their interest in the area. In November, the Canadian Embassy visited Saltillo, capital of Coahuila, and met with members of FUUNDEC and the Saltillo Migrant House.

We can say that there is a greater understanding of human rights work in Chihuahua and Coahuila by international actors thanks to the diplomatic corps' visits promoted by PBI, the media work around the opening of the Northern Team, and the tours of local HRDs to the United States and Europe (see page 5).

<sup>26</sup> "PBI opens a new team in the north due to the risks facing human rights defenders in Chihuahua and Coahuila," PBI Mexico, October 2, 2013; available at <http://bit.ly/1dG3MCb>

<sup>27</sup> More information on the organizations accompanied in Coahuila is available at: <http://bit.ly/1eomgXU>

# Historic achievement for Inés and Valentina after 12 years of seeking justice



Inés Fernández Ortega and Valentina Rosendo Cantú © Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

PBI continued to demand the full implementation of the sentences handed down by the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACtHR). The Mexican State has made some positive steps towards the implementation of the sentences. In terms of Tita Radilla's accompaniment, PBI witnessed new excavations in the former military barracks in Atoyac which sought the remains of Rosendo Radilla, unfortunately, without result.

The cases of Inés Fernández and Valentina Rosendo clearly showed the greatest progress. Supported by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center (*Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan*), the women won the establishment of the Trust for Compliance with Human Rights Obligations (*Fideicomiso para el Cumplimiento de Obligaciones en Materia 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 of the soldiers accused of raping Inés and Valentina in 2002 were arrested<sup>28</sup>. In 2014, these four Mexican servicemen will face trial in a federal civilian court, an unprecedented success in Mexico.

PBI congratulates Inés and Valentina for this historic achievement, and hopes that the cases against the detainees are heard in an impartial manner and according to

the due process of the law. The importance of these cases cannot be ignored, as impunity is one of the major obstacles faced by victims of violence on their path to justice.

After 12 years of fighting for their rights, many of them with PBI accompaniment, Inés and Valentina are finally close to achieving justice. PBI continues to urge the Mexican State to reform the Military Justice Code (*Código de Justicia Militar*), and to guarantee that human rights violations committed by active members of the military be judged under civilian law.

## Worrying wave of violence against HRDs

The year 2013 was marked by numerous attacks against human rights defenders (HRDs) in Guerrero. Ten social activists have been murdered under the current governor, with no results in any of the cases<sup>29</sup>. Guerrero was named as one of the five most dangerous states for the defense of human rights in Mexico<sup>30</sup>. The reigning impunity in cases of attacks against HRDs is in contrast to the imprisonment of members of the Regional Coordinator of Community Authorities - Community Police (*Coordinadora Regional de Autoridades Comunitarias - Policía Comunitaria*, CRAC-PC), an indigenous justice system which is supported by international treaties<sup>31</sup>.

This situation motivated the launch of the campaign 12 Days in Defense of Our Lives and Freedom (*12 Días por la Defensa de Nuestra Vida y Nuestra Libertad*), led

by Tlachinollan and supported by dozens of Mexican CSOs<sup>32</sup>. In December, several organizations sent a public letter to the governor demanding an end to the context of violence against HRDs and legal punishment for those responsible<sup>33</sup>.

## PBI continues to support the defense of human rights in Guerrero

In July, PBI participated in the XIX anniversary of Tlachinollan. PBI also held meetings with authorities from Guerrero's Executive and Legislative Branches, 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 suffered by HRDs, and demand an end to the reigning impunity in these cases.

## Self-defense groups

An increase in self-defense initiatives was witnessed across the state in 2013. Citizens' and people's police forces, organized and operated by the communities themselves, began to take responsibility for the security of their communities and peoples in a context of extreme violence. Tlachinollan has linked this tendency to the acute lack of legitimacy of state-level authorities in guaranteeing justice and security for its citizens<sup>34</sup>. In December, the Mexican Human Rights Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Derechos Humanos*, CNDH) concluded that the intensification was owed to the "increase in violence and the lack of an effective response by Guerrero authorities to combat it"<sup>35</sup>. PBI will continue to pay attention to the phenomenon in 2014, and will evaluate its connections with human rights defense in the state.

28 "Comienzan procesos penales contra probables responsables de las violaciones graves de Derechos Humanos cometidas contra Inés Fernández y Valentina Rosendo," Tlachinollan, January 9, 2014; available at: <http://bit.ly/1ajUpuG>

29 "Impunes, muertes de 10 activistas en el gobierno de Ángel Aguirre", La Jornada, October 20, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1dzx8YK>

30 OHCHR, 2013; ACUDEH, 2013; see footnote 1.

31 "Cese de las agresiones y criminalización contra la CRAC-PC en Guerrero", Red Nacional de Defensoras de Derechos Humanos en México, November 25, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1hvIVGh>

32 Further information on the campaign is available in Spanish at: <http://bit.ly/1kENHWL>

33 "Urgen OSC a Gobernador de Guerrero seguridad y justicia para activistas y personas defensoras de los Derechos Humanos," Tlachinollan, December 9, 2013; available at: <http://bit.ly/1asVKFA>

34 Digna Rebeldía: Guerrero, el epicentro de las luchas de resistencia, Tlachinollan, Mexico, June 2013, pp. 26-51; available at: <http://bit.ly/1m9n8o7>

35 Informe especial sobre los grupos de autodefensa y la seguridad pública en el estado de Guerrero, CNDH, Mexico, December 2013, p. 3; available at: <http://bit.ly/1eOmhlN>. Translation: PBI.

# Ensuring international support for HRDs

PBI's advocacy work throughout 2013 was structured by the arrival of a new federal government in December 2012, which meant that PBI had to establish and construct relationships with new authorities. In its meetings on a national and an international level, the Project maintained the focuses and themes it had been developing: pressure and advocacy for the optimal implementation of the Protection Mechanism (see page 14), making the defense of human rights visible within and outside Mexico by giving voice to human rights defenders (HRDs), and building international support networks for at-risk HRDs.

## **PBI ensures continuity of dialogue with the new federal government**

With the Institutional Revolutionary Party (*Partido Revolucionario Institucional*, PRI) winning the Mexican presidency in December 2012, PBI opened the dialogue with the new federal authorities. The meetings continued to focus on the need to protect the HRDs accompanied by PBI, and on the general situation for HRDs in Mexico. Relationships were established with the Human Rights Viceministry (*Subsecretaría de Derechos Humanos*) of the Interior Ministry; the Deputy Office of Public Prosecutions in Human Rights of the Federal Attorney General's Office (*Subprocuraduría de Derechos Humanos de la Procuraduría General de la República*, PGR); the Federal Police; the National Defense Ministry (SEDENA); the National Migration Institute (*Instituto Nacional de Migración*, INM); the Energy Ministry (*Secretaría de Energía*); the Viceministry of Population, Migration and Religious Affairs (*Subsecretaría de Población, Migración y Asuntos Religiosos*) of the Interior Ministry; the Federal Attorney General's Office; and various other public representatives. Some of these actors responded positively to PBI's requests: representatives spoke with HRDs at the launch of the new publication "A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights in Mexico: Initiatives and Risks of Mexican Civil Society"; the Interior Ministry visited Chihuahua and participated in a round table with HRDs; and attention towards the security situation and precautionary measures of some PBI-accompanied organizations in Oaxaca was increased.

Beyond protection for HRDs, PBI included in its meetings with the Mexican government certain issues of great concern to the organizations it accompanies. As an example, given the increase in attacks against various HRDs focused on migrants' rights, PBI expressed its concern on this issue to the Interior Ministry. This led to visits by federal representatives to migrants' shelters, risk-analysis studies for some organizations, and declarations in recognition of those defending migrants' rights. PBI also observed the meeting between Father 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 situation of migrants crossing Mexico to reach the United States, and the risky security 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 in Mexico: Initiatives and Risks of Mexican Civil Society"<sup>36</sup>. To launch the document, PBI organized a gathering between representatives of civil society, Mexican authorities, the diplomatic corps, and the UN. The event was attended by organizations from Chihuahua, Coahuila, Oaxaca, Guerrero, Puebla, Mexico State, and Baja California. Several Mexican authorities 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 explain the primary obstacles they faced in their work. 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 took steps to show its 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 Information Packs 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<sup>37</sup>. In addition, the Project launched the video *Involúcrate!* (Get Involved!)<sup>38</sup>, 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 (sent to at least 33 governments) and meetings with members of foreign governments (26 with embassies based in Mexico City, and 24 with Foreign Affairs Ministries or their permanent missions to the United Nations in Geneva), PBI provided information on the security situation and the obstacles faced by Mexican HRDs, as well as proposals of recommendations addressing their protection and recognition. With the desire to encourage participation of and consultation with civil society in this exercise, PBI facilitated meetings between representatives of European governments and Mexican HRDs. Two of the tours organized in 2013 (for Alba Cruz and Alma García) achieved this aim. In June, PBI also supported the visit of a Mexican civil society delegation to Europe, representing 33 organizations and networks,

<sup>36</sup> The Panorama is available at: <http://bit.ly/1fXzqxF>

<sup>37</sup> See: <http://bit.ly/1e0mgXU>

<sup>38</sup> The video is available at: <http://pbi-mexico.org/>



**Meeting between HRDs and the diplomatic corps at the launch of *A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights in Mexico: Initiatives and Risks of Mexican Civil Society***  
© PBI Mexico

which delivered a joint analysis of the human rights situation, as well as proposals for recommendations. PBI considers it positive that more than one third of the 176 recommendations Mexico received in the UPR concerned human rights defenders. Various countries expressed their concern for the risky security situation of HRDs, and requested that the Mexican government strengthen their protection and take measures to avoid attacks against them. Mexico has 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 discussion. Through information provided to UN mechanisms (the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the Working Group on business and human rights, etc.), and parallel events and meetings with representatives of the UN and EU, the need to consult, involve and protect those who defend the rights of individuals and communities affected by large-scale economic projects and investments was highlighted. Four of the tours organized or supported by PBI were for community HRDs affected by megaprojects. These tours allowed the HRDs to give their point of view to European politicians, and, according to their reports, it allowed them to gain skills in using the international mechanisms re-

lated to "business and human rights".

Finally, in its meeting with European embassies in Mexico and with institutions in Brussels, PBI continued to transmit the request of human rights organizations that they have stronger dialogue with the EU. It is with great pleasure that we received the EU's proposal to create a working group, so the EU Delegation and CSOs can monitor human rights in Mexico and the relationship between Mexico and the European Union. Meetings of this group were held over the course of the year, at which PBI attended. It is also worth highlighting that the members of the European Parliament who visited Mexico in 2013, including the president of the Parliament, systematically met with civil society representatives. Following a letter signed by PBI and other nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), the EU-Mexico Joint Parliamentary Committee for the first time included in its agenda a meeting with human rights organizations. Its president assured the organizations that in future, every visit of the commission would include a dialogue with representatives of Mexican civil society.

**Mobilizing support within and outside of Mexico**

In 2013, PBI continued to expand its dialog with the diplomatic corps in Mexico, focusing its meetings on: the UPR; the importance of implementing actions to protect HRDs based on the model of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders; the need for embassies to be actively involved in consultation with and protection of HRDs who accompany processes of resistance against megaprojects (especially when these are financed with capital from their country); and the urgency of highlighting the challenges faced by the HRDs in Chihuahua and Coahuila (where PBI recently opened a new team, see page 8).

As a result, several embassies took steps to support human rights defenders, and various visits were made to states where PBI works. The embassies of the Netherlands (February), the United States (March)

and Canada (April) traveled to Oaxaca to meet with HRDs, some of whom were accompanied by PBI. Similarly, on two separate visits, the EU working group on the human rights situation in northern Mexico (comprised of Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Spain, Sweden, and members of the EU Delegation to Mexico) in April, and the Canadian Embassy in November, visited the Saltillo Migrant House, the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights, and the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center (all accompanied by PBI), as well as the collective United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC). 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 legitimating and attention-bringing power of these visits and meetings, the diplomats made the commitment to include the concerns and cases shared by the HRDs in their meetings with Mexican authorities. The EU Delegation transmitted several of the issues raised by the HRDs in its dialogue with Mexican representatives.

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 6) and PBI also co-organized a visit by Bettina Cruz (APIITDTT) to that city. From Chihuahua and Coahuila, Alberto Xicoténcatl and Silvia Grijalva visited Washington, and Alma García conducted a tour of five European countries (see page 5).

# Alert on the increased risk in Oaxaca: An example of how an activation of PBI's support network operates

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 community human rights defenders (HRDs) they accompanied on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In addition, a generalized context of violence against HRDs was observed, characterized by attacks against and killings of activists (especially community HRDs) and journalists. Other organizations accompanied by PBI, such as Barca-DH, had also reported serious security incidents.

Given this panorama, between September 9 and 13 PBI decided to activate our support network. A private letter was then sent to the Viceministry of Judicial Matters and Human Rights of the Interior Ministry, and to the Governor of Oaxaca, with copies sent to various embassies; Foreign Affairs Ministries of particular European States; US authorities; parliamentarians and/or representatives of the EU; the UN; the Inter-American Human Rights System; and a range of international NGOs. These recipients, as well as PBI itself, informed other bodies within the Mexican and Oaxacan governments. With the desire of making the situation in Oaxaca known, an article was published on PBI's Web site, which was reproduced by other human rights organizations in Mexico and abroad. In the field, the PBI team increased its physical accompaniment of Código-DH and Barca-DH, and conducted visits to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec to visit the community HRDs in the area, meet with local authorities, and express once again its concern for the activists' safety.

In consequence, Mining Watch Canada, the Robert F Kennedy Center for Justice and Human Rights, and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders sent public and private letters to Mexico's government, asking that Oaxaca's HRDs be protected. Foreign parliamentarians also showed their concern for the situation. Member of European Parliament Willy Meyer did so with a question in parliament to the European Commission, inquiring what actions the EU was taking in Mexico to protect Oaxacan HRDs, particularly those who accompany community resistance processes against megaprojects or large-scale in-

vestments. In the United States, Congressman Sam Farr expressed his concerns to the Department of State. From embassies in Mexico, diplomatic contacts spoke directly with Mexico's federal and local governments on the situation for HRDs in Oaxaca, and the implementation of protection measures. The activation coincided with the Franco-German "Gilberto Bosques" Human Rights Prize for individual and collective human rights defenders, granted by the German and French embassies, and an honorable mention was given to Código-DH. The ambassadors of both nations took advantage of the prize-giving ceremony to recognize the recent wave of attacks against Oaxacan activists, and to publicly advocate for "the federal, state and municipal governments to act to guarantee the security of Alba and other human rights defenders like her, by implementing protection measures and sanctioning those responsible for acts of aggression against them". Similarly, the UK government used Mexico's Universal Periodic Review to pose a question and make a recommendation, both explicitly about the security situation faced by community defenders in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec, and advising an increase in their protection through the creation of a consultation mechanism with the communities affected by megaprojects. Finally, at the request of Código-DH and PBI, in December the German, Norwegian and Swiss Embassies visited the shelter run by Father Solalinde and also some wind farms in Juchitán, on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. The political advisors of the embassies met with the local HRDs to better understand their concerns in relation to the large wind-farm projects funded by foreign investment. This visit was publicized in *communiqués* on the Web pages of the three embassies.

All of this mobilization had an impact. Mexican federal and state authorities returned to the tables to discuss the implementation of protection measures with Código-DH and Barca-DH, and some of

these measures were fast tracked. In November, the Oaxacan governor, together with high-level public servants, 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



Volunteer accompanies human rights defender Alba Cruz in Oaxaca © PBI Mexico

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 regard to implementing 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.

# Security and advocacy: Expanding the consultancy program

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 own 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, Guerrero, Oaxaca, Federal District,

human rights defenders, freedom of expression, extrajudicial executions, political prisoners, and migrants.

As a result, this last year we noted that all of the organizations we accompany in Oaxaca have appropriated some of our recommended tools, and incorporated different practices into their daily lives. This demonstrates not only their efforts to protect themselves, but also reflects their increased awareness – one of our primary objectives with these programs – which results in a decrease in their vulnerability when facing risks in their work. This can be seen in their current digital security policies (such as the use of encryption programs for written and spoken communication); in seeking safer offices; in applying specific measures both while traveling and in the office; in the existence of protocols for extraordinary activities, etc. In addition, it is important to mention the potential multiplier effect of these programs, as both Código-DH and EDUCA are sharing and replicating the tools we have provided with other HRDs<sup>39</sup>.

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 devised for public protests; two processes establishing emergency response systems were coordinated among different organizations, etc<sup>40</sup>.

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.



PBI team members giving a security workshop to community human rights defenders in Oaxaca © EDUCA

Puebla, Chiapas, Sonora, Mexico State, Querétaro, Tlaxcala, Guanajuato, Morelos, and San Luis Potosí), as well as to 36 community leaders in Oaxaca. The organizations benefited by these programs are diverse, both in origin and work: in 2013, the groups were social movements, collectives, civil associations, networks of organizations, and centers for attention to migrants. Their issues include indigenous peoples, women's rights, defense of land and territory, access to justice and impunity, forced disappearances, torture, LGBTI rights, sexual and reproductive rights,

<sup>39</sup> Another example of the multiplier effect has been the Cerezo Committee Mexico (Comité Cerezo México), which was detailed in our Annual Report 2012.

<sup>40</sup> For security and confidentiality reasons, details of the organizations and their internal strategies will not be revealed here.



PBI delivering a workshop to HRDs in Ciudad Juárez, Chihuahua © PBI 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 OSC*) 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 on the issue<sup>41</sup>, and, together with other international organizations, published a letter supporting the requests of Mexican civil society<sup>42</sup>.

During 2013, PBI continued both its accompaniment of the CSO Group, as well as dialogue with the government, diplomatic corps, organizations, and international bodies<sup>43</sup>. 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 govern-

ment 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<sup>44</sup>.

41 The full interview is available at: <http://bit.ly/1bTAAej>

42 Further information on the activities associated with the one-year anniversary can be found at: <http://bit.ly/1juqoNZ>

43 At the request of both CSOs and the Mexican government, PBI has been accompanying the process of establishing the Protection Mechanism since 2009. To learn more about the process, watch PBI's video "The Duty to Protect", available at <http://bit.ly/1df7RNd>

44 See also p.11 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”

*Daniel Ó 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?

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 teamma-



Daniel with human rights defender Alba Cruz in Oaxaca © PBI Mexico

tes 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 Project’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 accompaniment 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 Nigeria or Thailand: 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.

## PBI Mexico Team Members in 2013

**General Coordinator**

Maik Müller (Germany)

**European Representative**

Marianne Bertrand (France)

**Finance and Fundraising Manager**

David Ávila (Portugal)

**Assistant Grant Manager**

Caroline Hay (Scotland)

**MEXICO CITY TEAM:**
**Public Relations Coordinator**

Niamh Ni Bhriain (Ireland)

Ben Leather (UK)

**Field Team Coordinator**

Patricia García Pérez (Spain)

Sierra Schraff-Thomas (United States)

**Security Program Coordinator**

Ivi Oliveira (Brazil)

**Publications and Communications Coordinator**

Rubens Carvalho (Portugal)

Graciela Martínez González (Spain)

**Administration and Accounting**

Lilia Díaz (Mexico)

**NORTHERN TEAM:**

Ricardo Neves (Portugal), Natalia Slepoy (Spain), Stefania Grasso (Switzerland), Sebastián Melo (United States)

**MEXICO CITY TEAM:**

Rubens Carvalho (Portugal), Elsa Pierre (France), Céline Monnier (Switzerland), Luis Miguel García (Spain)

**TRAINING COMMITTEE:**

Karim Jah (Germany), Liselot Petry (Germany), Maik Müller (Germany), Sandra Camacho (Spain), Sergi Sendra (Spain)

**PROJECT COMMITTEE:**

Marielle Tonossi (Switzerland), Sandra Caluori (Switzerland), Sandra Froidevaux (Switzerland), William Payne (Canada), Michael Tambyn (Australia)

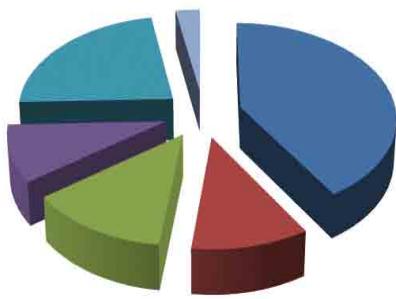
## PBI Mexico Activities in 2013

PHYSICAL ACCOMPANIMENT		
ORGANIZATIONS AND/OR HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS ACCOMPANIED BY PBI	ACCOMPANIMENTS	MEETINGS
Committee for the Integral Defense of Human Rights Gobixha (Código-DH)	19	16
Services for an Alternative Education (EDUCA)	2	8
Bartolomé Carrasco Briseño Regional Human Rights Center (Barca-DH)	10	10
Father Alejandro Solalinde and the staff of the <i>Hermanos en el Camino</i> migrant shelter	3	5
Paso Del Norte Human Rights Center	1	7
Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights	1	2
Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center	1	3
Saltillo Migrant House	3	7
Pasta de Conchos Family Organization	0	2
Cerezo Committee Mexico	3	8
Tlachinollan Human Rights Center	3	2
Mexican Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations (AFADEM)	2	0
Organization of the Me'phaa Indigenous People (OPIM) – includes Valentina Rosando Cantú and Inés Fernández Ortega	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Other organizations (state, national, international) – within Mexico and abroad</b>		<b>115</b>
ROUND TABLES, EVENTS AND PROTESTS		
Spaces facilitated by PBI	12	
Spaces observed by PBI	33	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>45</b>	
ADVOCACY		
MEETINGS WITH AUTHORITIES	-	MEETINGS
Guerrero – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	4
Oaxaca – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	28
Chihuahua/Coahuila – Municipal and state-level authorities	-	15
Federal authorities	-	23
Diplomatic corps and Embassies in Mexico	-	64
Foreign Affairs Ministries and international bodies outside of Mexico	-	63
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>197</b>
PUBLICATIONS		
	ENGLISH	SPANISH
Special publications	1	1
Information Pack	12	12
Annual Report	1	1
News (Web page)	30	30
Audiovisual	2	2
<i>Entrevistas</i> (Interviews)	2	2
Briefings	3	3
Information sheets on new accompaniments	2	2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>53</b>
TOURS		
	NO. OF TOURS	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES
Europe	5	5
North America	1	2
CONSULTANCIES IN SECURITY, PROTECTION AND ADVOCACY		
WORKSHOPS AND CONSULTANCIES		
	NO. OF WORKSHOPS	NO. OF BENEFICIARIES
Workshop	11	161
Consultancies	18	63

## Financial Report 2013

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.



## PBI Mexico income in 2013

DONORS	Income USD
<b>CANADA</b>	
Basilian Fathers (Human Development Fund)	2.990
Campbell World Fund	934
Canadian Embassy in Mexico – Canada Fund for Local Initiatives	717
OPSEU – Ontario Public Service Employees Union	2.803
<b>FRANCE</b>	
Non Violence XXI	4.245
Paris Bar Association	4.766
<b>GERMANY</b>	
Bread for the World / Brot für Welt	29.432
Civil Peace Service (German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development)	73.726
Institute of International Affairs (ifa), Zivik Programme (Civil Conflict Resolution) (German Federal Foreign Office)	118.363
Misereor	10.314
<b>ITALY</b>	
PBI Italy	3.803
<b>NETHERLANDS</b>	
Dutch Embassy in Mexico	21.021
<b>NORWAY</b>	
Norwegian Embassy in Mexico	15.305
<b>SPAIN</b>	
Santander Municipality	16.450
Valladolid Municipality	1.358
Valladolid Provincial Council	10.907
<b>SWEDEN</b>	
Amnesty International – Swedish Amnesty Fund	18.685
<b>SWITZERLAND</b>	
Canton of Basel	13.607
Fedevaco: City of Renens	3.514
Fedevaco: City of Rolle	4.217
Maya Behn-Eschenburg Foundation	10.285
Protestant Church Saint Gallen-Tablat	1.846
Solidarity International	4.220
Swiss Embassy in Mexico	13.019
<b>UNITED KINGDOM</b>	
British Embassy in Mexico – Foreign and Commonwealth Office	10.548
PBI UK	9.494
Sigrid Rausing Trust	9.134
<b>UNITED STATES</b>	
MacArthur Foundation	35.000
Overbrook Foundation	4.000
<b>OTHER FUNDS</b>	
Other programs	1.360
Personal donations	10.328
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>466.391</b>

## PBI Mexico expenditure in 2013

BUDGET LINES		Budget USD	Expenditure USD
FIELD PRESENCE	Northern Team	60,272	56,040
	Oaxaca Team	62,690	56,961
	Security workshops	6,017	10,878
STRATEGIC PRESENCE	Volunteer preparation and training	17,789	18,265
	Team and public relations coordination in Mexico City	80,224	88,922
ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH	European representation	38,359	41,539
	Publications	7,918	16,252
	Events, multimedia and other advocacy tools	8,991	9,214
	Human rights defenders advocacy tours to Europe and North America	6,110	9,292
GENERAL PROJECT COORDINATION AND STRATEGY	Project Coordination Office	47,541	53,044
	Project Committee meetings	21,823	17,583
	Fundraising and finance	28,977	24,554
FUNDRAISING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION	Administration	13,885	15,017
	Governance and international PBI coordination	30,174	30,263
	Project audit and global audit	4,428	5,465
TOTAL EXPENDITURE		435,199	453,287



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- Accompaniment of HR's Defenders & Field Presence (29%)
- Strategic Presence & Public Relations in Mexico (20%)
- Security & Protection Workshops Program (2%)
- Outreach & International Advocacy (16%)
- General Coordination & Strategy (16%)
- Fundraising, Finance & Administration (9%)
- Governance (7%)
- Audits and others (1%)



**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](http://www.pbi-mexico.org)