



PEACE BRIGADES  
INTERNATIONAL  
MEXICO PROJECT



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## Members of PBI Mexico in 2016

This year, the people who made up PBI Mexico come from 15 countries from Europe, the Americas and Oceania. Seventy-five percent of these people are volunteers, either in the field, as part of the Strategic Committee, or in our Training and Selection Committee. We would like to offer our deep appreciation for the extraordinary work that they do each day to contribute to protecting the space of action for human rights defenders in Mexico. We extend our deepest thanks to each and one of you for your dedication and commitment to making PBI Mexico's work possible.

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## Perceptions of security and insecurity among human rights defenders in Mexico

**By: Alice Nah, Patricia Bartley, Katrina Malia-mauv; Centre for Applied Human Rights, University of York**

The Center for Applied Human Rights at the University of York conducted a study on how human rights defenders navigate risk, manage their personal security and receive support in Mexico, Colombia, Egypt, Kenya and Indonesia.<sup>1</sup> Three important issues arose when we asked them what makes them feel safe and unsafe:

### Understanding the context of repression

The defenders stated that to feel secure it is essential the context of repression “clarity is the starting point”. Others stressed the importance of conducting actor mapping in the context in which they work and identifying their allies and potential aggressors. Collusion between state and non-state actors creates complexities, promotes unpredictability and contributes to feelings of insecurity: “you do not know what you are facing at all... it is a transnational company and there are other actors, but you do not always know the connections that might exist with the ruling political class as well as with organized crime.”

### The importance of gender and intersectionality of security experiences

The need for intersectional security analysis is especially crucial for women human rights defenders “Security should be seen from an intersectional point of view, especially when it comes to security for women. Each sphere and social structure makes our security possible or vulnerable.” Women human rights defenders expressed frustration because widespread violence against women, street harassment and other forms of sexual harassment were often not taken seriously. They also highlighted the serious impact of violence and harassment that comes



Participants in the dialogue on risks and protection in Mexico, convened by PBI and the University of York  
© PBI Mexico

from people within their own organizations and from other defenders. During the workshop, the invisibility of women's human rights work was highlighted. Even the language used to describe them as defensores (term for defenders in Spanish using the male conjugation). perpetuates their invisibility. Through this study, it became clear to us that women human rights defenders are threatened in different ways than men and have different ways of responding to these risks.

### The value of relationships with others and solidarity

Relationships with others, networks and perspectives held within these spaces generated important feelings of security: “[What makes me feel secure is] that there are now women worrying about the protection and safety of other women.” In fact, in the survey conducted as part of this study, 90.4% of participants noted that they ‘frequently’, ‘almost always’ or ‘always’ ensured that they informed others of their movements and of what they were doing when performing sensitive work, a much higher percentage

of respondents than that obtained from participants in other countries. Support networks are vital to perceptions of security, especially the support of peers and of other human rights defenders. Community members, neighbors, friends, religious entities and actors related to mental health were also mentioned as important sources of support.

In January 2017, we held a workshop in Mexico City; it was here that 79 human rights defenders who had suffered threats or attacks in the previous five years shared their experiences with us. We are pleased to partner with PBI Mexico to share some of the findings of this research with these 31 men and 48 women at risk defenders. The meeting also included the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, Michel Forst.

<sup>1</sup> Erick Monterrosas and Paola Pacheco Ruiz undertook the investigation in Mexico for this project. To see more results of the investigation in English and Spanish, visit: <https://goo.gl/xtTqri>



# Situation of human rights defenders in Mexico worsens in worrisome ways



Press conference in Mexico City of the “Rarámuri Caravan” from the Sierra Tarahumara ©PBI Mexico

During its fieldwork in 2016, PBI observed a continual worsening of the situation for human rights defenders in Mexico, as evidenced by the statistics of attacks and levels of impunity in the country. Between January and August 2016, the “All Rights for All” Network (Red TdT) documented 47 cases of human rights defenders murdered in the framework of their work for the defense of human rights.<sup>2</sup> Between January 2011 and May 2016, Urgent Action for Human Rights Defenders (ACUDDEH) registered a total of 957 human rights violations<sup>3</sup> committed against HRDs (not including cases of arbitrary detention, disappearance and torture).

## Structural Issues:

Despite significant legislative advances, such as the constitutional reform in 2011 and the law creating the Governmental Protection Mechanisms for HRDs and Journalists in 2012, no decrease in the number of attacks on defenders could be observed, nor was protection implemented effectively. The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has observed that, since 2011, there has been a

continuous annual increase in aggression against human rights defenders, denoting Chihuahua, Guerrero and Oaxaca as the most dangerous states to defend human rights.<sup>4</sup> The CNDH points out that such attacks are frequently attributed to public servants.

This scenario of aggression is exacerbated by high levels of impunity: according to the Global Impunity Index, it is estimated that impunity in Mexico lies at 95%<sup>5</sup>, a figure that does not include unreported crimes, which amount to an estimated 92.8%. Lack of effective investigation is, in turn, a consequence of the absence or institutional weakness of prosecutors specialized in crimes committed against HRDs. In many cases, these attacks are not investigated as part of their human rights work. This situation is aggravated by the lack of recognition of the figure of the human rights defender and his/her role as a promoter of democratic rights and values.

**The National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) has observed that, since 2011, there has been a continuous annual increase in aggression against human rights defenders, denoting Chihuahua, Guerrero and Oaxaca as the most dangerous states to defend human rights.**

The militarization of public security is another phenomenon that has been underlined by various actors at the national and international level.<sup>6</sup> The reform of the military code of justice and initiatives of domestic security law could contravene the international treaties that Mexico has ratified and ignore the recommendations that bodies created by those treaties have



Press conference on the recommendations to Mexico of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions © PBI Mexico

formulated. According to various human rights organizations, the reform of the military code gives more authority to military justice, such as the search of public bodies and domiciles of individuals, the intervention in private communications or the extension of pre-trial detention.<sup>7</sup> At the same time, the proposed internal security law was met with opposition by civil society in 2016<sup>8</sup>, as it would allow for the direct participation of the army in activities such as patrols, arrests and even research activities.

**International organizations have described the current situation in Mexico as a “human rights crisis”, which makes the recognition of the fundamental work of defenders and the specific and integral protection that safeguards their integrity more important than ever, as it ensure that they can continue to carry out their legitimate work.**

At the national level, smear campaigns have been observed, identified by the Red TdT as “leaks and other strategies aimed at undermining the public credibility of recognized human rights defenders.” In April 2016, UN experts urged the Mexican Government to counter the campaign of

approach to their security and to guarantee their participation in decision-making, including the drafting of laws, policies, contracts and evaluations by states and companies.

Human rights groups and organizations currently accompanied by PBI are working for the effective implementation of human rights on diverse issues, and in a context that is becoming increasingly difficult. International organizations have described the current situation in Mexico as a “human rights crisis”, which makes the recognition of the fundamental

work of defenders and the specific and integral protection that safeguards their integrity more important than ever, as it ensure that they can continue to carry out their legitimate work.



Meeting during joint Mission of the CNDH and UN-DH Mexico with civil society organizations in Guerrero © PBI Mexico

7. Reforms to military justice violate human rights: CSOs. [goo.gl/W7Bovr](http://goo.gl/W7Bovr)

8. Security without War. [goo.gl/Lpmjzy](http://goo.gl/Lpmjzy)

9. UN experts ask Mexico to put an end to the smear campaign and support human rights defenders. [goo.gl/veiW5v](http://goo.gl/veiW5v)

10. Report on the situation of human rights defenders and environmental defenders <https://goo.gl/5NdMWA>



# Disappearances in Mexico: the search for the disappeared is a search for truth, justice and guarantees of non-repetition

The problem of disappearances is not new in Mexico.<sup>11</sup> During the 1960s and 70s, hundreds of people disappeared in different Mexican states during the so-called “Dirty War”. So far, according to official figures, between 2006 and 2016 more than 30,000 people were disappeared in Mexico, although according to civil society organizations there could be many more. For several years, local civil society<sup>12</sup> and international organizations<sup>13</sup> have warned of a crisis of disappearances in Mexico, and in the report following their last visit to the country, the United Nations Committee against Enforced Disappearance declared disappearances as “widespread” in the country, and the lack of its criminalization as “worrisome”.<sup>14</sup>

Since its arrival in Mexico, PBI has accompanied people and organizations working on this issue. One such case is that of Tita Radilla, vice president of the Association of Relatives of the Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico (AFADEM), whose father, Rosendo Radilla Pacheco, disappeared<sup>15</sup> during a military arrest in 1974 during Mexico’s so-called “Dirty War”. The ruling of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR), in

this case in 2009 condemned the Mexican State for serious violations of human rights and led to a series of changes in military jurisdiction. Other cases have occurred in the context of the so-called “war on drugs”, a security strategy initiated by the administration of Felipe Calderón. In this new context, organizations in the states of Chihuahua and Coahuila such as the Paso del Norte Human Rights Center, the Center for Women’s Human Rights (CEDEHM), the Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center, and the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights accompany relatives of disappeared persons who have organized themselves in their search for justice. PBI also accompanies organizations working on emblematic cases, such as that of the 43 disappeared students from Ayotzinapa<sup>16</sup>, accompanied by the ‘Tlachinollan’ Human Rights Center, the ‘José María Morelos y Pavón’ Center for Human Rights and the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center, among others.

In the majority of cases, the lack of effective investigations, and therefore the lack of results<sup>17</sup>, either in the search for people or in the identification and punishment of those responsible, is a particularly worrying phenomenon.

## Impunity and the Need to Legislate: Different visions, Spaces of Convergence

Faced with the complexity, continuity and deepening of the problem, civil society organizations and groups of relatives of disappeared persons, as well as international organizations, alert to the lack of specific and comprehensive legislation on disappearances at the federal level. Different groups and organizations have made joint efforts to influence the generation of appropriate legislation, and throughout 2016, PBI maintained frequent dialogue with two of these movements.

In 2010, the Cerezo Committee, an organization accompanied by PBI since 2002,



Abel Barrera of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, civil society organisation accompanied by PBI which represents the victims in the case of 43 students disappeared in Iguala, Guerrero. © PBI Mexico

joined other human rights organizations to launch the National Campaign against Enforced Disappearances<sup>18</sup>, carrying out activities to draw civil society’s attention to the increase in cases of enforced disappearance and the impunity with which they are met. In April 2016, the Campaign denounced that the draft of the “General Law to Prevent and Punish the Enforced Disappearance and the Disappearance of Persons Committed by Private Individuals” (LGD), prepared by four senatorial commissions, still did not recognize “that enforced disappearances in Mexico occurs due to a systematic and widespread policy of the Mexican State”.

## The search for truth and justice has increased the risk faced by relatives, collectives, and the organizations that accompany them or provide legal support in their cases, resulting in threats, harassment and even murder

The Movement for Our Disappeared in Mexico<sup>19</sup> emerged in March 2015 and is made up of more than 70 organizations and collectives of relatives of missing persons. The Movement’s main focus is to contribute to the development and approval of the LGD. To this end, they created, together with civil organizations and

the support of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), a process of consultation through regional and sectoral events. Drawing from these, they have defined the fundamental points that must be included in the law so that it recognizes and guarantees the full exercise of the rights of victims regarding truth, justice, reparation and guarantees of non-repetition.

## A General Law against enforced disappearances and those perpetrated by individuals will aid in addressing this serious human rights violation if the contributions of collectives of family members are taken into account, and their participation in the planned mechanisms is assured

In September 2016, PBI, together with other civil society organizations, organized a meeting between the two groups and representatives of the Diplomatic Corps in Mexico, with the goal of providing visibility to their concerns. This resulted in a joint

need for the law to include a commitment to comply with the international recommendations and observations; the active participation of family members and the organizations that accompany them in the search, investigation and identification processes; and the creation of a National Search Commission. In addition, the demands include the need to institute a process of declaration of absence that recognizes and guarantees the continuity of the legal personality of the victims; the establishment of a national public registry of victims of disappearances; the removal of references to non-located persons; and the allocation of sufficient budget for the proper implementation of the law.

## Remaining issues and challenges

Although passage of the LGD with inclusion of these characteristics was not achieved in 2016, for the first time, the Mexican State recognized that “Mexico has a serious problem related to the disappearance of people, whether by individuals, state authorities or by individuals with the acquiescence of authorities.”<sup>21</sup>

Several challenges remain, including the eradication of the selective disappearance of human rights defenders and journalists, and of mass disappearances such as those which occurred in Tierra Blanca in January 2016, or previously in Piedras Negras (Coahuila), Cuauhtemoc (Chihuahua), as well as Chilapa and Iguala in Guerrero. Impunity remains prevalent in most cases, including emblematic cases such as Ayotzinapa, where not only is there a lack of significant progress in the lines of research proposed by the Interdisciplinary Group of Independent Experts (GIEI) and the National

Human Rights Commission (CNDH), but where defamation, attempted criminalization and threats were made against the relatives and friends of victims, in addition to a smear campaign against the GIEI.<sup>22</sup>

20 Relatives of Missing Persons Request Collaboration from the Diplomatic Corps to Guarantee Suitability of General Law. [goo.gl/7e29nk](http://goo.gl/7e29nk)  
21 159th IACHR session Human rights situation and enforced disappearance in Mexico. [goo.gl/Af5RoA](http://goo.gl/Af5RoA)  
22 Condemned “Smear campaign” against the GIEI. [goo.gl/nSfpGG](http://goo.gl/nSfpGG)  
24 Jesus Jimenez, member of the Brigade for the search of the disappeared in Veracruz killed. [goo.gl/tiL9jZ](http://goo.gl/tiL9jZ)



Groups of relatives gather in Mexico City during the National March for Dignity to increase visibility to the issue of disappearance and share their experiences © PBI Mexico

The search for truth and justice has increased the risk faced by relatives, collectives, and the organizations that accompany them or provide legal support in their cases, resulting in threats, harassment and even murder.<sup>23</sup> All of this occurs in a context where more and more family members are joining the search brigades to locate the whereabouts of their loved ones.

A General Law against enforced disappearances and those perpetrated by individuals will aid in addressing this serious human rights violation if the contributions of collectives of family members are taken into account, and their participation in the planned mechanisms is assured. The work of searching for loved ones, justice and proposal writing from civil society continues despite the risk involved to family members, collectives and the organizations that accompany them. PBI seeks to contribute, to the opening and maintenance of these groups space for action by continuing to provide international support and visibility to their struggle, in the hopes that they will eventually see the eradication of disappearances in Mexico.



Special rapporteur Michel Forst with Diana Iris García of FUUNDEC-M, during a speaking tour to Europe organized by PBI © PBI Mexico



Meeting between diplomatic corps and civil society to discuss the General Law on Disappearance © PBI Mexico

statement<sup>20</sup> that includes the minimum requirements that should be included in the LGD. At the same time, the statement urges the international community to promote the adoption of a law that meets international standards. Among these recommendations and demands are the

11 2016 Review, WOLA. [goo.gl/LR4hHG](http://goo.gl/LR4hHG)  
12 “A Treatment of Indolence”: The State’s Response to the Disappearance of Persons in Mexico, Amnesty International. [goo.gl/VHe5ah](http://goo.gl/VHe5ah)  
13 Forced disappearances in Mexico: a look from the organisms of the United Nations System. [goo.gl/g9YxBM](http://goo.gl/g9YxBM)  
14 Concluding Observations of the UN Committee against Forced Disappearance from its Review of Mexico. [goo.gl/CHT5p4](http://goo.gl/CHT5p4)  
15 Rosendo Radilla Pacheco case. [goo.gl/AZV61R](http://goo.gl/AZV61R)  
16 Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, Ayotzinapa case. [goo.gl/YuBEWt](http://goo.gl/YuBEWt)  
17 Preliminary observations of the IACHR’s In-Place Visit to Mexico. [goo.gl/7apuzR](http://goo.gl/7apuzR)  
18 2017 National Campaign against Forced Disappearances. [goo.gl/UZtW55](http://goo.gl/UZtW55)  
19 Movement for Our Disappeared in Mexico. [goo.gl/6sGJWC](http://goo.gl/6sGJWC)



# The case of Nochixtlán and the right to protest



Mural which commemorates the "Oaxaca Operative" in Nochixtlán. © PBI Mexico

On June 19, 2016, a series of clashes took place between demonstrators and federal and state security forces in Nochixtlán, Hacienda Blanca, Viguera, Huitzo and Telixtlahuaca. This occurred as a response to protests against educational reforms carried out by teachers belonging to the National Coordinator for Education Workers (CNTE – the Teachers Union). The "Oaxaca Operation Report"<sup>24</sup> published by Mexican organizations, outlines that the confrontation resulted in 27 arrests – some of the subjects of which were reportedly tortured – dozens injured; and 8 deaths. Since the first signs of instability in May, PBI informed the diplomatic corps of the increase in social tension in the state, and, after the outbreak of violence in Nochixtlán<sup>25</sup>, PBI activated its international support network, contacting representatives of federal and state government, and meeting with human rights institutions to

express concern. In these communications, PBI reinforced the call for dialogue and urged Mexican authorities to respect the right to protest and freedom of assembly and to ensure the physical integrity of both the teachers and of the human rights defenders who accompanied the social mobilization, many of which are accompanied by PBI (among them Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity Oaxaca, Committee for the Integral Defense of Human Rights Gobixha (Codigo-DH) and Services for Alternative Education - EDU-CA).

National<sup>26</sup> and international<sup>27</sup> actors also reacted publicly, urging for clarification of the facts in the case, especially regarding the alleged excessive use of force by po-

lice. Likewise, the CNDH reinforced its presence<sup>28</sup> by sending additional observers and experts, and issuing precautionary measures for the adequate medical care of injured people who had not gone to hospitals for fear of reprisals. Two days after the removal of protesters by police forces, the Citizens' Council of the Oaxaca State Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (DDHPO) advised of the presence of local, state and federal police at its offices, a fact which could be interpreted as a provocation and as an attempt to dissuade citizens from making complaints about police abuses. Investigations initiated by the DDHPO determined that human rights violations<sup>29</sup> of at least ten types, including the right to life and physical integrity, as well as the right not to be subjected to tor-

ture had occurred.

**PBI reinforced the call for dialogue and urged Mexican authorities to respect the right to protest and freedom of assembly and to ensure the physical integrity of both the teachers and the of human rights defenders who accompanied the social mobilization**

In response to this context, PBI reinforced physical presence in the state and international observation was undertaken at key moments, such as the first magisterial and popular meeting in the City of Oaxaca following these events, and during the "Caravan of Indigenous Peoples of Oaxaca for Peace and Justice" one month after the Oaxaca operation. PBI also closely followed civil society concerns regarding the development of the judicial process following these events, as well as the reports prepared by human rights organizations.



PBI accompanies Codigo-DH in Nochixtlán North © PBI Mexico



PBI accompanies civil society during the "Motorized Caravan of Indigenous Peoples of Oaxaca for Peace and Justice" © PBI Mexico

On June 22, 2016 a dialogue took place between Secretary of the Interior - Miguel Ángel Osorio Chong - and the CNTE's Unified Negotiation Commission. At the roundtable, agreements were reached that allowed for the release of magisterial leaders imprisoned at the beginning of the protests. A special investigation commission was also formed by Congress which produced a report<sup>30</sup> on the events; however, the report was not supported by the victims of Nochixtlán, since it did not include testimony from many victims.<sup>31</sup> At the international level, on July 8, members of the European Parliament (MEPs) sent a letter<sup>32</sup> addressed to President Enrique Peña Nieto, expressing concern about the violent events and calling for the immediate release of teachers detained in an arbitrary and illegal manner.

Although progress had been made in victim compensation proceedings by the end of 2016, dialogue panels which included authorities, as well as the Victims Committee and CNTE closed without reaching agreement. Despite the visual documentation available, the facts have not yet been clarified and attacks and equipment theft have been reported by journalists<sup>33</sup> who covered the event. Members of the

Victims Committee have also reported being the targets of intimidation, unauthorized searches<sup>34</sup> and other attacks during their search for truth and reparation of harm.

**National and international actors also reacted publicly, urging for clarification of the facts in the case, especially regarding the alleged excessive use of force by police**

PBI Mexico provides accompaniment to several of the organizations that work with the victims in this case case, both to contribute to the maintenance of their spaces for action that allow them to seek truth and justice; as well as for the recognition of the right to social protest and dialogue as a means of seeking peaceful resolutions to conflicts.

24 Report of Human Rights Violations, "Operation Oaxaca". [goo.gl/jpPrts](http://goo.gl/jpPrts)  
 25 Public Announcement of PBI in the context of social violence in Oaxaca. [goo.gl/EQz4my](http://goo.gl/EQz4my)  
 26 TdT Network: Dialogue and not state violence, the path to resolving the teacher conflict. [goo.gl/g9kmh2](http://goo.gl/g9kmh2)  
 27 IACHR condemns acts of violence in Oaxaca, Mexico. [goo.gl/NADAJ1](http://goo.gl/NADAJ1)  
 28 CNDH issues precautionary measures for the acts of violence that occurred today in Oaxaca. [goo.gl/ZttCdf](http://goo.gl/ZttCdf)  
 29 Human Rights Violations for Police Operation in Nochixtlán, Hacienda Blanca, Viguera, Huitzo and Telixtlahuaca Investigated by the DDHPO. [goo.gl/ALZsch](http://goo.gl/ALZsch)

30 Federal Legislative Branch: Report - Follow-up Committee to the events in Nochixtlán, Oaxaca. [goo.gl/Sn5kvp](http://goo.gl/Sn5kvp)  
 31 Victims of Nochixtlán disqualify Senate report. [goo.gl/z14Uor](http://goo.gl/z14Uor)  
 32 MEPs condemn police repression in Nochixtlán. [goo.gl/cwosui](http://goo.gl/cwosui)  
 33 Residence of journalist who registered police assaults in Nochixtlán robbed. [goo.gl/Di3ejh](http://goo.gl/Di3ejh)  
 34 Victims of Nochixtlán accuse repression after repudiating Senate report... [goo.gl/xne1Aa](http://goo.gl/xne1Aa)



# The case of the Pasta de Conchos Family Organization



Workshop on security and advocacy facilitated by PBI for members of OFPC in Cloete © PBI Mexico

In 2016, PBI reinforced its accompaniment<sup>35</sup> in the Carbon Region of Coahuila due to an escalation of intimidation and defamation faced by members of the Pasta de Conchos Family Organization (OFPC). Attacks have particularly targeted the organization's director, Cristina Auerbach, who in 2013 was granted protection measures by the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists due to the risk she faces in exercising her legitimate work.<sup>36</sup>

Because of her work in defense of economic, social and cultural rights, in the context of coal mining in northern Mexico, Cristina Auerbach and other members of OFPC have suffered various reprisals, including a defamation campaign in the local media and the criminalization of its members, who have received citations related to investigations into alleged crimes of dispossession against mining activity and several alleged crimes against public safety. Their situation reflects the risk faced by advocates of economic, social and cultural rights at the global level, a situation, which has been denounced by international organizations such as the UN Human Rights Council. In its Resolution

of 24 March 2016<sup>37</sup>, the Council called on states to ensure the safety of advocates of economic, social and cultural rights and publicly acknowledge the important work they do. The UN Working Group on business and human rights also visited Mexico in August 2016<sup>38</sup> and issued a similar statement. In their remarks, the members of the UN Working Group emphasized that HRDs must be better protected to carry out their crucial role of defending human rights. They added that high-level government officials as well as corporate CEOs should take a clear stance that intimidation and attacks against human rights defenders are not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

In this context, and given the particular risk faced by OFPC in carrying out its work in an isolated area, PBI has had to look for new strategies in order to contribute to the protection of its members, maintain their space for action and ensure that they are able to continue to carry out their legitimate work. These strategies include regular physical accompaniment in

the area; constant dialogue with local, state and national authorities regarding their risk situation and need for protection, and increasing the visibility of OFPC's work at the international level. Finally, these strategies also include training in security strategies and protection for this organization.

**Because of her work in defense of economic, social and cultural rights, in the context of coal mining in northern Mexico, Cristina Auerbach and other members of OFPC have suffered various reprisals, including a defamation campaign in the local media and the criminalization of its members**

<sup>35</sup> PBI expresses deep concern about security situation of defender Cristina Auerbach. [goo.gl/dwnH83](http://goo.gl/dwnH83)

<sup>36</sup> Pasta de Conchos, the fight for justice. [goo.gl/UB8VCZ](http://goo.gl/UB8VCZ)

<sup>37</sup> The UN Human Rights Council recognizes human rights defenders promoting ESCR. [goo.gl/AEsmPp](http://goo.gl/AEsmPp)

<sup>38</sup> Declaration of the UN WG on Business and Human Rights. [goo.gl/CtScA1](http://goo.gl/CtScA1)



Meeting between embassies and PBI within the framework of the public declaration on the security situation of OFPC © PBI Mexico

In March 2016, several international organizations<sup>39</sup>, including PBI, denounced a defamation campaign carried out against Cristina Auerbach and called on authorities to take the necessary measures to

ensure her safety and that of other OFPC members. The organizations demanded that protection measures be effectively implemented in a manner appropriate to the context in which they work; and that their legitimate work in defense of human rights be publicly recognized. At the same time, PBI met with representatives of the embassies of 12 countries in Mexico to express concern about the risk situation faced by the OFPC.

With the dual objective of making the work of OFPC visible and supporting the strengthening of its international support network, in November 2016, PBI organized an international speaking tour<sup>40</sup> for OFPC members Cristina Auerbach and Esmeralda Saldaña, during which they met with key actors in the international community. During the tour, they also participated in public events and were interviewed by various media outlets in Belgium, Switzerland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Ireland and Norway. During their meetings, the defenders presented the context of the coal region of Coahuila, the effects of coal mining on

economic, social and cultural rights, and the risk they face due to the exercise of their legitimate work in the defense of these rights.

In December 2016, at the request of the OFPC, PBI also traveled to Cloete, Coahuila to provide a workshop to the members of the organization with the aim of increasing their security and protection capacities as well as expanding their support network at the national and international level.

Despite the risk involved, Cristina Auerbach and the OFPC continue their work to defend human rights and affirm that the support of PBI and the visibility it has been able to generate for their work has been fundamental. According to Cristina Auerbach, with the accompaniment of PBI "I feel safer to continue doing what I do, I believe [the aggressors] have not escalated the violence due to the presence of PBI, because they know well how you work and that PBI will not forego my safety or the safety of families who are participating in the OFPC."



Cristina and Esmeralda, from OFPC, during a European speaking tour organized by PBI © PBI Mexico

<sup>39</sup> Front Line Defenders, case of Cristina Auerbach. [goo.gl/J2At1qCy](http://goo.gl/J2At1qCy) short URL

<sup>40</sup> PBI: OFPC undertakes tour of incidence in Europe. [goo.gl/mbrdg5](http://goo.gl/mbrdg5)



“I left PBI determined to help change what is surely one of the most relevant human rights issues of our time”<sup>41</sup>

Peace Brigades International changed my life. There's no two ways about it. The inspiration, experience, skills and knowledge gained during my time in Mexico have allowed me to forge a career in human rights and a life contributing to a cause I am passionate about. Not to mention all the ongoing friendships I have with wonderful people from around the world! I wouldn't change a thing.

I signed up for PBI Mexico in 2009, when I was working in a community centre in Wales, but desperate to get involved in international issues and experience front line human rights work. The principal appeal of PBI was twofold: on the one hand, it had a clearly thought through and well-articulated vision of how an international NGO might support local struggles without meddling; and secondly, it was a longer term commitment of one year, meaning I was going to grow more, learn more and be more useful. It was also fairly democratic. You didn't need a pile of cash to join – my bank account looked pretty similar upon leaving PBI as when I joined, but my head and my heart were overflowing.

I volunteered for a year in Guerrero before staying four more to do paid posts in Mexico City, before moving to the International Service for Human Rights (ISHR) in Geneva to support local activists from

around the world in lobbying for positive action from the United Nations. Unlike many working in and around the UN, I had neither a Masters nor a series of costly internships behind me. But ISHR appreciated the experience I had gained in the best human rights school in the world. PBI had given me a unique insight into the risks and realities facing human rights defenders on the ground.

Now a Campaigner at Global Witness, I advocate for the protection of defenders working to defend their land and the environment in the face of abusive business projects imposed upon their communities. I feel very privileged to have a job through which I work with local defenders towards changing global phenomenon. My inspiration comes from Mexico, where I had learnt first-hand what has since been proven by a range of international experts: that these are some of the most vulnerable defenders in the world. I left PBI determined to help change what is surely one of the human rights issues of our time: abuses propelled by the hunger for natural resources and the thirst for money.

I feel privileged too, to continue to collaborate with other ex-PBI volunteers; dear friends, working for NGOs around the world. Our shared experiences have forged an exceptional bond. I was recently

in Honduras to launch Global Witness's new report on the situation facing defenders there, and found myself in meetings with colleagues from Mexico who continue to work for defender protection, but now under the banners of Amnesty International, Front Line Defenders and PBI Honduras. I also volunteer for the Mexico Project's Strategic Committee, allowing me to support where possible and continue to learn.

So not only did PBI change my life in a professional sense, but also in a personal one. It opened my eyes to the world, brought it closer to me, and taught me how to try and change it.



Ben Leather, during the launch event for PBI's publication on Women Defenders: "Dignas" © PBI Mexico

Comprehensive protection and the need to expand the Network of Security Trainers in Mexico



National Meeting of land and territory defenders © PBI Mexico

In recent years, PBI Mexico has seen the number of requests for workshops and consultancies in security and protection increase.<sup>42</sup> HRDs in Mexico have invested in the construction of self-protection strategies that allow them to maintain or expand their space for action, in order to continue carrying out their important work despite the adverse context in which they

must undertake it. This is especially relevant for organizations outside of Mexico City, where government response to these risks has often been insufficient.

Faced with an increase in demand, and because few local civil society organizations carry out this specialized work on security and protection of human rights defenders, it has been impossible for PBI to respond positively to every workshop request. For this reason, and with the aim of ensuring that Mexican civil society organizations be the ones who facilitate these workshops to ensure their sustainability, we reached the decision to start a second cycle of 'Training of Trainers' workshops on integral security.

Complementing this training effort, in June 2016 PBI co-convened the first National Security Meeting in Defense of Land, Territory and the Environment, which was attended by 40 grassroots defenders from across Mexico. During the meeting, participants shared their analysis of the current context as well as successful security strategies and the challenges they encountered while carrying out their work.

With Training of Trainers workshops and exchange of experiences of security strategies between HRDs, PBI believes we can expand our range of action, make our presence more efficient in Mexico and contribute to the consolidation of expertise and empowerment within Mexican civil society itself.

41 Ben Leather fue voluntario de PBI Mexico y hasta la fecha colabora en el proyecto. Actualmente trabaja para Global Witness. goo.gl/tcW4fB  
42 PBI, Programa de Asesoría en Seguridad y Protección. goo.gl/JVg5Vv

PBI Mexico in Numbers

Throughout 2016, PBI Mexico provided international accompaniment to Mexican Civil Society Organizations in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Mexico City, including 12 organizations with formal accompaniment agreements and 5 that received temporary support due to their risk situation.

PBI accompaniment, which includes physical presence; national and international advocacy; dissemination of information; training in security and protection and support network building; and the facilitation of dialogue spaces between key actors, benefitted at least 57 civil society organizations and 574 human rights defenders, at least 60% of whom are women human

rights defenders. The work of these individuals and organizations – and therefore PBI's work indirectly – benefits at least 80,000 people and often also affects the human rights situation throughout the country.

| PHYSICAL PRESENCE   |     |
|---|-----|
| Physical accompaniment  | 44  |
| Meetings with civil society organizations   | 267 |
| International accompaniment to civil society coordination spaces (Espacio_OSC and Focal Group on Business and Human Rights)                             | 54  |
| ADVOCACY  |     |
| Advocacy meetings with Mexican Authorities at the local, state and federal level  | 84  |
| Advocacy meetings with key actors in the International Community  | 149 |
| Increasing visibility through articles, letters, communiqués, monthly newsletter and social media   | 32  |
| CAPACITY BUILDING   |     |
| Preparation and follow up meetings to training spaces   | 18  |
| Facilitation of capacity building workshops in security and protection and support network building   | 13  |
| Training of Trainers (ToT) in security and protection   | 2   |
| FACILITATION OF DIALOGUE SPACES   |     |
| Organization of international speaking tours to Europe and North America  | 4   |
| Preparation and follow up meetings to dialogue spaces   | 27  |
| Facilitation of dialogue ("bridging") spaces between civil society organizations and key actors from the Mexican government and international community | 8   |

Organizations formally accompanied by PBI in 2016 include:

**OAXACA:** Committee for the Integral Defense of Human Rights (Código-DH); Father Alejandro Solalinde and 'Hermanos en el Camino' Migrant Shelter Staff; Services for an Alternative Education (EDUCA); Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Equity Oaxaca (Consortio).

**GUERRERO:** Association of Family Members of the Detained Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico (AFADEM); Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

**CHIHUAHUA:** Paso del Norte Human Rights Center

**COAHUILA:** Saltillo Migrant Shelter; Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Human Rights Center; Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center; Pasta de Conchos Family Organization

**MEXICO CITY:** Cerezo Committee Mexico



PBI discusses the protection of human rights defenders with representatives of several Embassies in Mexico City. © PBI Mexico



# PBI Mexico's 2016 finances

In 2016, PBI Mexico has followed the stability achieved in previous years, both in terms of its structure and activities. However, financially this was a challenging year, especially in fundraising. After 2 consecutive years with annual budget increases of approximately 10%, in 2016 the project had to lower its budget by 7%, returning to 2014 levels. With the expiration of some significant multi-year donor contracts the project just managed to cover our basic funding needs for the year, avoiding significant cuts in activities. Another indicator of the difficult fundraising landscape faced by the project is the shrinking of its donor base. Of the 26 donors who supported our human rights work in Mexico in 2015, only 18 continued funding the project in 2016 (these numbers consider expired multi-year contracts, donors who had provided specific funding of only one year, and entry of new donors in 2016).

This fundraising trend, according to analysis made by PBI globally, reflects a situation observed throughout PBI's various projects and marks a fundamental concern.

At PBI Mexico we are aware of the complexity of current trends in global fundraising, and continue to strive to seek new options to renew our funding. This challenge, already identified in the previous year, involved an investment effort in the collection of funds, and in the adaptation of some work plans of staff and volunteer teams. Despite this adverse funding context, PBI Mexico was able to continue our work in the states in which we maintain permanent presence, and provide the agreed level of support to human rights defenders we accompany.

The provisional result for 2016 (unaudited) is a small surplus, a result of the responsible management of the project, which quite early in the year planned its activities according to the confirmation of the available funding. The total expected final expenditure of the project was slightly lower than budgeted, partly due to the devaluation of the Mexican peso against the EURO, which contributed to the final surplus foreseen in the 2016 accounts.

In summary, although we currently operating in a difficult financial context with challenges in fundraising, PBI Mexico managed to ensure that these elements did not reflect negatively on the overall work of the project, nor on our presence on the ground.

PBI Mexico thanks all of our donors for their continued support, which has allowed us to maintain our work and activities throughout 2016.<sup>43</sup>

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## Income

PBI Mexico's fundraising landscape follows the international patterns observed in the global organization. Funding through public funds (state, regional or local) has fallen for the first time below 50%, and the relative importance of private foundations is more pronounced than ever.



■ Public state funding (25%)

■ Public local or regional funding (13%)

■ Embassies in Mexico (3%)

■ Faith based organizations (12%)

■ Foundations and other private funding (40%)

■ Multilateral funds (6%)

■ Other funds (5%)

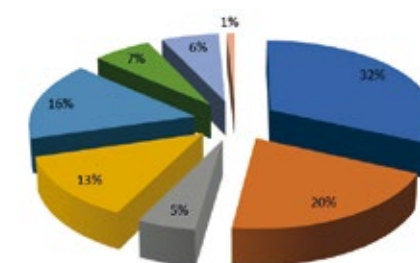
## PBI Mexico income in 2016

|   | Gastos EURO    |
|---|----------------|
| Civil Peace Service (Germany)                                     | 94.180         |
| Catalan Cooperation and Development Agency (Catalunya, Spain)     | 29.189         |
| Municipality of Santander (Spain)                                 | 6.665          |
| Municipality of Valladolid (Spain)                                | 4.850          |
| Basque Development and Cooperation Agency (Basque Country, Spain) | 6.583          |
| European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR)        | 23.000         |
| Basilian Fathers Human Development Fund (Canada)                  | 5.760          |
| French Parliamentary Reserve (France)                             | 2.000          |
| Bread for the World (Germany)                                     | 22.500         |
| Misereor (Germany)  | 15.000         |
| MacArthur Foundation (United States)                              | 54.000         |
| Overbrook Foundation (United States)                              | 4.500          |
| Open Society Foundation (United States)                           | 20.845         |
| Vaudoise Cooperation Federation (FEDEVACO) (Switzerland)          | 61.224         |
| Maya Behn-Eschenburg Stiftung (Switzerland)                       | 9.702          |
| Embassy of Switzerland in Mexico                                  | 1.667          |
| Ev. Kirche St Gallen – Tablat (Switzerland)                       | 875            |
| Embassy of Finland in Mexico                                      | 9.750          |
| PBI USA   | 1.800          |
| Other programs  | 2.700          |
| Private donations   | 1.422          |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  | <b>378.207</b> |

## PBI Mexico expenditure in 2016

| BUDGET LINES  | Expenditure EURO |
|---|------------------|
| <b>FIELD PRESENCE</b>   |                  |
| Regional Team Chihuahua & Coahuila                                | 59.852           |
| Regional Team Oaxaca & Guerrero                                   | 48.454           |
| Capacity Building   | 19.226           |
| Volunteer preparation, training and support                       | 11.669           |
| <b>STRATEGIC PRESENCE</b>   |                  |
| Field Teams and Advocacy coordination in Mexico City              | 76.826           |
| <b>ADVOCACY AND OUTREACH</b>                                      |                  |
| European Representation   | 34.022           |
| Communications and Publications                                   | 5.253            |
| Human rights defenders advocacy tours to Europe and North America | 10.175           |
| <b>GENERAL PROJECT COORDINATION AND STRATEGY</b>                  |                  |
| Project Coordination Office                                       | 47.145           |
| Project Assemblies and Strategic Retreats                         | 13.316           |
| <b>FUNDRAISING, FINANCE AND ADMINISTRATION</b>                    |                  |
| Fundraising and Financial Oversight                               | 14.008           |
| Administration  | 10.180           |
| <b>GOVERNANCE</b>   |                  |
| Governance and international PBI coordination                     | 23.515           |
| <b>OTROS</b>  |                  |
| Project audit and global audit                                    | 3.110            |
| <b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>  | <b>376.751</b>   |

## Expenditure



■ Support of Human Rights Defenders and physical presence (€ 120,000)

■ Strategic Presence and Advocacy in Mexico (€ 76,800)

■ Security and Protection Workshops Program (€ 19,200)

■ Lobbying and Advocacy in Europe and North America (€ 49,500)

■ General Coordination and Strategic Planning (€ 60,500)

■ Fundraising, Finance and Administration (€ 24,200)

■ Governance (23.500 €)

■ Project auditing (3.100€)

PBI Mexico's structure was maintained and therefore the support to Human Rights Defenders and other strategic areas of work in Mexico remain the areas to which the project devotes most of our resources.

The financial data in this report only includes program expenses, it does not include financial expenses such as exchange rate losses or other accounting adjustments.



The Mexico Project's Annual Report is a publication written and edited by PBI Mexico. PBI Mexico does not take responsibility for statements made by third parties in this publication.

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Writing and editing PBI Mexico  
Design and layout Nando Cornejo  
Photography: PBI Mexico

### PBI INTERNATIONAL OFFICE

Development House 56-64 Leonard Street  
London EC2A 4JX, UK  
Tel. +44 20 4085 0775  
www.peacebrigades.org

### PBI MEXICO COORDINATION OFFICE

Serapio Rendón 57B  
Col. San Rafael  
06470 ciudad de Mexico, Mexico  
Tel. +52 55 5514 2855  
comunicacion@pbi-mexico.org  
www.pbi-mexico.org

### PBI NORTHERN MEXICO TEAM

Calle Alabama 2417  
Col. Quintas del Sol  
31214 Chihuahua, Chihuahua  
norte@pbi-mexico.org

### PBI SOUTHERN MEXICO TEAM

Esmeralda 106  
Col. Lomas del Crestón  
68024 Oaxaca de Juárez, Oaxaca  
sur@pbi-mexico.org



Accompaniment to land and territory defenders in Oaxaca © PBI Mexico





**Peace Brigades International (PBI)** is a non governmental 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:

[pbi-mexico.org](http://pbi-mexico.org)  
[comunicacion@pbi-mexico.org](mailto:comunicacion@pbi-mexico.org)

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