



ANNUAL REPORT 2017

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Guerrero © PBI México

Members of PBI Mexico 2017

The people involved with PBI Mexico during 2017 came from 17 countries in Europe and the Americas. 75% are volunteers, working in the field or as members of the Strategic or Training Committees. We wish to express our deepest gratitude to all of these for the extraordinary contribution they make every day to provide protection to human rights Defenders in the country: thanks to each and every one of them for the commitment they have shown to PBI Mexico; without their efforts the project would not be able to carry out its work

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Editorial

Dear Friends,

For PBI, as for many other civil society organisations, 2017 posed significant challenges. The six years of President Enrique Peña Nieto's administration have been characterised by a continuation of the widely-questioned security policies initiated during the presidency of his predecessor Felipe Calderón, and by a marked reduction in the political space available to Mexican and international civil society organisations. 2017 was the most violent year in Mexico's recent history and PBI has noted with concern the resulting worsening of the situation faced by Human Rights Defenders (HRDs), in particular those dedicated to the defence of land and territories, who continue to face harassment, threats, attacks and murder as a response to their legitimate activities in defence of the human rights of all Mexicans.

The following pages describe the work carried out by PBI and by local organisations to respond to this situation and ensure that HRDs are able to enjoy conditions of sufficient safety, and the necessary political space, to be able to carry out their activities. During the year, PBI offered protection by providing international accompaniment; pressured national and international actors to fulfil their obligations to protect HRDs; publicised the situation of HRDs in our publications and social networks; provided security and protection training to dozens of HRDs; and facilitated opportunities for dialogue to permit HRDs to tell their stories and express their needs to key players in the Mexican government and the international community. Through these activities we have sought to make some contribution to enabling HRDs to pursue and expand their activities, which in the current Mexican and global context is now more important than ever.

Internally, for PBI 2017 was a year of reflection and planning. In November, we celebrated our General Assembly, where we agreed a new global strategic plan that will guide our work over the next six years. An external evaluation of PBI Mexico's work and impact was also carried out. The findings of this evaluation will help to inform our work in Mexico over the next three years. During this whole process the commitment of every member of the organisation to the country and to the people and organisations we work with has been clear, as has the desire to strengthen our work so that

we remain capable of having a positive impact on the protection of HRDs in Mexico.

We understand that the coming year will bring with it significant challenges for Mexico: federal elections and the inauguration of a new presidential administration and the need to ensure the full implementation of the recommendations made to Mexico by different international bodies. There is also the overriding challenge facing HRDs in their daily struggle to enable Mexico to be a country where human rights are respected, where everyone can enjoy access to justice, and where the destiny of individuals is not determined by their gender, ethnicity or place of birth. At PBI we recognise the fundamental importance of the work of HRDs, and we hope to continue making a modest contribution to helping them to continue with their work.

We dedicate this report to Alberto Donis Rodríguez, who PBI had the privilege of accompanying in his role as Coordinator of the Albergue de Migrantes Hermanos en el Camino (Shelter for Brother Migrants on the Road) in Ixtepec, Oaxaca. Alberto died following a road accident in June 2017. In PBI we will remember him for his enormous commitment and solidarity with the migrant community, and for his humility, dedication and unparalleled courage. In solidarity,

Sierra Schraff Thomas

General Coordinator

PBI Mexico



Alberto Donis of the Albergue de Migrantes Hermanos en Camino and PBI México volunteers © PBI México

The risk of defending human rights: Mexico's challenging context

2017 has seen a marked increase in the overall levels of violence in Mexico^{1, 2}, and in several of the states where PBI works – in particular in Guerrero – there has been a corresponding rise in the levels of risk faced by HRDs. Mexican and international civil society organisations have documented the increased number and gravity of acts of aggression against HRDs³. The murders of over 30 HRDs and activists were recorded during the period, alongside hundreds of other security incidents. Similarly, the organisation Global Witness documented the murder of at least 15 Land, Territory and Environmental Defenders during the 2017, making Mexico the fourth most dangerous country in the world to defend these rights⁴. Murdered HRDs included the well-known environmental leader Isidro Baldenegro López, winner of the Goldman Prize, and Juan Ontiveros Ramos, both of whom were defenders of indigenous rights and members of the Rarámuri people in the Sierra Tarahumara. Miriam Rodríguez, a prominent defender of human rights who sought justice for her disappeared daughter was also murdered, in the state of Tamaulipas, highlighting the risk faced by individuals working on questions of enforced disappearance in Mexico. Journalists, and others working on the question of freedom of expression also faced increased levels of risk, the organisation Article 19 reporting the murder of at least 11 journalists during the year⁵.

In addition to the increased levels of violence and direct attacks that occurred during the year, several journalists and HRDs complained of having been victims of attempted digital espionage. A June 2017 report found that on distinct occasions “prominent human rights lawyers, journalists and anti-corruption activists have been targeted by advanced spyware sold to the Mexican government on the condition that it be used only to investigate criminals and terrorists”⁶. The programme, Pegasus, permits access to the contacts stored in the targeted telephone, and to its GPS information, microphone and camera. While the Mexican government confirmed it had acquired the programme, it denied having used it against activists without prior authorisation from the judicial authorities⁷. Journalists and prominent civil society organisations, including the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez human rights Centre and the ‘Tlachinollan’ Human Rights rights Centre,



Tita Radilla, AFADEM, in the Forum “Internal Security Law, Human Rights and Security: a false dichotomy”, Guerrero© PBI México

confirmed that they had been targeted by digital attacks, and called on the government to convene a panel of independent experts to investigate the issue⁸. Similarly, both the UN Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Expression and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights expressed concern at these allegations of spying and called on the Mexican government to conduct an exhaustive investigation⁹. However, by the end of 2017 little progress had been made¹⁰.

Given this context, and following official visits to Mexico, different UN officials including Michel Forst, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders, have expressed concern at the situation of HRDs in the country. In the report of his official mission, published in early 2017, Forst highlighted as particularly worrying the situation of women HRDs, of men and women who defend Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and in particular those working in defence of land, territory and the environment, of indigenous rights and of family members of the disappeared, all of whom are frequently victims of threats, intimidation, surveillance, defamation campaigns, criminalisation, physical attack, enforced disappearance and murder¹¹.

Equally, while Mexico has a Federal Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, civil society organisations that are members of the Espacio_OSC (Space for Civil Society Organisations), a coordination that

1 Mexico Peace Index 2017 <http://bit.ly/2JUA0WQ>

2 El País “México cerrará 2017 como el más violento en 20 años” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2K47Rso>

3 Front Line Defenders Annual Report on Human Rights Defenders at Risk in 2017 <http://bit.ly/2yySsPv>

4 Global Witness “New data reveals 197 land and environmental defenders murdered in 2017” <http://bit.ly/2K8jWQz>

5 Article 19 “Periodistas asesinados en México” (available only in Spanish) <https://articulo19.org/periodistasasesinados/>

6 New York Times “Using Texts as Lures, Government Spyware Targets Mexican Journalists and Their Families” <https://nyti.ms/2fiwEHj>

7 BBC “Mexican president denies spying on journalists, lawyers and activists” <https://bbc.in/2wgcNg>

8 Artículo 19 “#GobiernoEspia a activistas, defensores de derechos humanos y periodistas en México” (available only in Spanish) <https://articulo19.org/gobiernoespia/>

9 OHCHR “México: expertos de la ONU piden investigación independiente e imparcial sobre el uso de spyware contra defensores de DD HH y periodistas” <http://bit.ly/2lupUNI>; CIDH “Office of the Special Rapporteur expresses concern over alleged spying targeting journalists and human rights defenders in Mexico and urges the State to conduct a thorough and independent investigation” <http://bit.ly/2K0cp6W>

10 WOLA “Report Confirms Mexico Government’s Lack of Progress in Spyware Investigation” <http://bit.ly/2Kd5Fid>

11 OHCHR “Final Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Michel Forst, on his mission to Mexico from 16 to 24 January 2017” <http://bit.ly/2MN1o89>

monitors the mechanism, argue that it still has many defects: an absence of a gender focus; a lack of integral protection measures that “permit a response to the different forms of violence and do not focus exclusively on providing protection for the person and their family, but also for their work”¹²; a lack of preventive measures focused on the structural causes of risk and the human rights violations committed against HRDs; and a failure to ensure an adequate implementation budget¹³.

It is important to mention that in recent years legislative advances have been made in the field of human rights in Mexico, such as general laws on torture¹⁴ and disappearance¹⁵, and that the Mexican government has made advances in developing a National Action Plan (NAP) on Business and Human Rights. However, civil society organisations have complained that these initiatives have failed to take key inputs into account, in particular the contributions of those most affected, such as victims’ and family groups, or the communities that are impacted by large-scale economic projects. National and international organisations have expressed doubt about whether the authorities have sufficient will to implement the plan and have called on the Mexican government to deal with the implementation gaps that have been identified in the proposed legislation, such as the creation of national exhumation and cadaver identification programmes¹⁶ and the provision of sufficient resources¹⁷.

The Focal Group on Business and Human Rights¹⁸, which was set up with the objective of “guarantee[ing] that the State and national and transnational companies respect, promote and protect human rights by adopting the UN Guiding Principles and the highest relevant human rights standards” and which has been involved in the process established to develop the NAP since 2014, withdrew from the process in 2017. The Focal Group explained that this decision was taken in response to the failure of the plan to respond adequately to the demands of civil society, which included the lack of serious mechanisms for the protection of HRDs¹⁹.

While there are numerous international recommendations emphasising the urgency of the matter, none of the proposed laws or policies deal directly with the almost total impunity that exists in Mexico²⁰, in particular in cases involving human rights violations and attacks on HRDs and journalists.

In addition, and in spite of strong national²¹ and international²² objections, the Mexican Congress approved the Internal Security Law in October 2017. The law includes provisions intended to regulate the use of the security forces in the provision of public security. Civil society organisations and different international bodies have stressed that the law represents a threat to human rights²³ and to HRDs, and would contribute to restricting the space available to civil society and to limiting social protest²⁴.

As the six years of Enrique Peña Nieto’s administration draw to an end, and Mexico’s political and social life begins to focus on the 2018 elections, civil society is facing up to the possibility that there will be no political interest in facing the multiple human rights challenges the country faces. It is a distinct possibility that – as in the 2016 and 2017 state elections – electoral violence will occur and that this might have an impact on the ability of civil society organisations to carry out their activities. In this context, it will be more important than ever that the work of HRDs in Mexico is protected and recognised as fundamental to the protection of democracy, the rule of law and the justice system.

12 Espacio_OSC Para la Protección de Personas Defensoras y Periodistas “Protección integral para personas defensoras de derechos humanos y periodistas: la deuda del Estado mexicano” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2tq14ll>

13 Espacio_OSC Para la Protección de Personas Defensoras y Periodistas “Protección integral para personas defensoras de derechos humanos y periodistas: la deuda del Estado mexicano” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2tq14ll>

14 General Law to prevent, investigate and sanction torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/21t0Lpr>

15 General law on enforced disappearance or disappearances caused by particular persons (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2tmRmQK>

16 Amnesty International “Promulgación de la Ley General de Desaparición, una esperanza para miles de familias en México” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2tgmKS3>

17 OHCHR “ONU-Derechos Humanos saluda la aprobación de la Ley general sobre desaparición de personas en México” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2ltCwEQ>

18 For more information see: Grupo Focal sobre Empresa y Derechos Humanos Nota Conceptual, 2016 (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2yrL0Wc>

19 Business and Human Rights Centre “México: El Grupo Focal de Sociedad Civil se deslinda del proceso de elaboración del Programa Nacional sobre Empresas y Derechos Humanos” <http://bit.ly/2tjvjdZ>

20 UDLAP and CESIJ “Índice Global de Impunidad Mexico 2018” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2MDzKco>

21 Colectivo #Seguridadsinguerro “Positionamiento sobre las iniciativas en materia de Seguridad Interior” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/21tLORA>

22 OHCHR “Mexico draft security law threatens rights and should be rejected, UN rights experts warn” <http://bit.ly/2lt0klV>

23 WOLA “Multiple Sectors Push Back Against the Implementation of Mexico’s New Internal Security” <http://bit.ly/2yyVALf>

24 WOLA “International Human Rights Bodies, Civil Society Groups Share Concerns on Mexico’s Internal Security Law” <http://bit.ly/2MgyvPo>



Forum “Special Economic Zones, community life and environment”, Oaxaca © PBI México

PBI Mexico in figures

During 2017, PBI Mexico provided international accompaniment to **14 organisations** and **2 civil society coordination spaces** in the states of Chihuahua, Coahuila, Guerrero, Oaxaca and Mexico City.

The accompaniment provided by PBI - which includes physical presence; national- and international-level advocacy; awareness-raising; security training; protection; the creation and maintenance of support networks; and

the facilitation of dialogue spaces between HRDs and actors with responsibility for protection - benefited at least **48 civil society organisations** and **542 HRDs**, of whom 60% were women. The work carried out by these individuals and organisations – and on a secondary plan, that of PBI itself – benefits at least **75,000 people** and potentially impacts on the human rights across the whole country.

PHYSICAL PRESENCE	
Accompaniment and observation	81
Monitoring calls	72
Meetings with Mexican civil society organisations	227
ADVOCACY	
Advocacy meetings with Mexican authorities at local, state and federal level	81
Advocacy meetings with representatives of the international community (Diplomatic Community, foreign governments, parliamentarians, multilateral systems)	44
Advocacy meetings with international civil society organisations	28
Awareness-raising using thematic publications, articles, letters, press statements and a monthly bulletin	20
TRAINING	
Preparation meetings and monitoring of training spaces	21
Workshops on security, and protection; the creation and maintenance of support networks; and spaces for analysis	14
Training of Trainers	1
THE CREATION OF SCENARIOS FOR DIALOGUE	
The organisation of international advocacy tours to Europe and North America	4
Facilitation of dialogue between civil society organisations and key actors from the Mexican government and/or the international community	46

During 2017 PBI provided international accompaniment to the following organisations:

OAXACA:

Committee for the Integral Defence of Human Rights (Código-DH); Consortium for Parliamentary Dialogue and Oaxacan Equality (Consortio Oaxaca); Father Alejandro Solalinde and the staff at 'Hermanos en el Camino'; and Services for Alternative Education (EDUCA)

GUERRERO:

Association of Relatives of Detained - Disappeared and Victims of human rights Violations (AFADEM); 'Tlachinollan' Human Rights Centre; the José Morelos and Pavón Regional Human Rights Centre

CHIHUAHUA:

Paso del Norte Human Rights Centre; Sierra Madre Alliance (ASMAC)

COAHUILA:

Saltillo Migrant House; Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Centre for Human Rights ; Centre; Juan Gerardi Human Rights Centre; Pasta de Conchos Family Organisation

MEXICO CITY:

Comité Cerezo, Mexico; Espacio_OSC: Space for Civil Society Organisations; Focal Group on Business and Human Rights

Defending the Land, Territory and the Environment is to Defend Life itself

Given the increased levels of violence and impunity in Mexico, PBI and the individuals, communities and organisations it accompanies who are dedicated to defending land, territory and the environment rights have been obliged to seek new advocacy and protection strategies in an attempt to increase the political costs that those behind human rights violations might eventually have to face. The intensification of attacks and the murder of internationally recognised leaders²⁵ has placed Mexico in the international spotlight. Criminalisation and defamation campaigns are being used in an increasingly systematic, repetitive manner²⁶ with the intention of paralysing and delegitimising the work of HRDs. Furthermore, a gender perspective shows that women HRDs continue to face specific risks including the threat of rape, sexual torture, sexual harassment and threats against their children. To these risks should be added further vulnerability factors if the HRD also belongs to an indigenous community or lives in a rural or remote places.

For several years now PBI Mexico has accompanied an increasing number of defenders of land, territory and the environment in the north and the south of the country, as well as coordination initiatives such as the Focal Group on Business and Human Rights and the organisations involved in monitoring the implementation of the Contingency Plan in the

state of Chihuahua²⁷. Advocacy and awareness-raising have also been increased with the UN in oral interventions before the Human Rights Council, reiterating the need to improve protection measures, apply a differential focus, and recognise the role of HRDs²⁸, and expressing particular concern at the situation of HRDs in the Sierra Tarahumara in Chihuahua²⁹. Likewise, PBI has been monitoring Mexico's compliance with international agreements and has expressed its support to UN treaty bodies such as the Committee on Economic Social and Cultural Rights on the occasion of its examination of the country³⁰.

Among the activities that are most valued by the organisations accompanied by PBI are the advocacy tours, organised with the aim of carrying out activities to strengthen their international support networks and establish channels of communication with key targets such as the UN Special Procedures, representatives of the European institutions, ministries of foreign affairs and civil society. In 2017, PBI organised two tours to Europe, with members of the Sierra Madre Alliance -ASMAC (Chihuahua), Services for Alternative Education -EDUCA and the Network of Community Defenders of the People of Oaxaca - REDECOM (Oaxaca). Through this we were able to raise awareness of the situations of risk faced by HRDs working in areas where mining, energy, tourism, logging and other megaprojects are being implemented.

Additionally, at the end of May 2017, PBI jointly organised a Latin American meeting on "Strategies for the Defence of Territory" in Mexico City in cooperation with national and international civil society organisations. The meeting brought together more than 50 people to work together to develop protection and security policies³¹. At the end of the meeting the participants produced a joint declaration, calling on the international community to back their processes of resistance, and re-affirmed their commitment to continue struggling "for the planet, our common cause".

25 OHCHR "Michel Forst, Outrageous and senseless: the murder of Isidro Baldenegro Lopez, a Raramuri environmental defender" <http://bit.ly/2tjg1Xi>

26 IACHR "Criminalization of human rights Defenders" <http://bit.ly/2MMUA9n>



Closing event of the National Campaign on the Defence of Mother Earth and territory, Oaxaca © PBI México

27 The Contingency Plan comprises a package of measures and actions intended to deal with the principal problems facing HRDs.

28 Statement of PBI to the Working Group on Business and Human Rights (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2trHza>

29 Statement of ASMAC and PBI to the Working Group on Business and Human Rights (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2yllzWa>

30 PBI "PBI and International Organizations Present Shadow Report to the UN DESC Committee" <http://bit.ly/2tjHnN2>

31 Mesoamerican Initiative of Women Human Rights Defenders "Regional Gathering of Defenders of Land, Territory and Environment" <http://bit.ly/2MMW0AJ>



*Accompaniment to Cristina Auerbach of the organisation
Pasta de Concho, Coahuila © PBI México*

In December 2017, PBI Mexico published *In Defense of Life: Defenders of Land, Territory and Environmental Defenders at Risk*³² in order to raise the profile of this group of HRDs and highlight the important contribution they make to the construction of fairer societies where human rights are respected, and the urgent need to honour the duty to provide them with protection in the unprecedentedly risky circumstances in which they work. At the launch of the report HRDs from federal authorities took part in a workshop designed to allow them to share experiences of resistance and strengthen support networks between defenders of land and territory in different states of Mexico. The men and women who took part also had the opportunity to meet with members of the Office in Mexico of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and to share information on cases and present their recommendations concerning their protection needs. For several of the HRDs who took part in the event it was their first opportunity to present their cases and to demand a response from members of the international community.

Processes of struggle can be long and costly. *Defend Life* brings together different cases and portrays the principal risks, but also includes success stories, such as the reduction of death rates in the coal mining zone of Coahuila thanks to

the work of the Pasta de Conchos Family Organisation, or the collective rejection of open cast mining in the territory belonging to the me'phaa, ñuu savi and sulj'aa indigenous peoples in the mountains of Guerrero as new community-based resistance strategies and strategies that demand respect for fundamental rights. The publication also reports on the efforts of civil society organisations in the state of Chihuahua, which in June 2017 resulted in the signing of the "Contingency Plan", which contains a range of measures to prevent acts of aggression and human rights violations and guarantee they are not repeated. The Plan focuses in particular on the situation of risk faced by the communities of the Sierra Tarahumara and on the protection measures that were required to respond to their specific situation.

Many challenges remain, and they are now more urgent than ever. But in spite of the risks, and beyond the obstacles that might be faced in the future and the many difficulties that are yet to be resolved, there is hope in the struggles that - every day and at great personal cost - are engaged in by the communities, movements, individuals and organisations that work to defend land, territory and the environment: organisations that PBI has the privilege to accompany.

³² PBI "In Defense of Life: Land, Territory and Environmental Defenders at Risk" <http://bit.ly/2K9Tk1z>

Observation Mission to Guerrero: Civil Society on the Alert

In the context of the acute violence occurring in Guerrero³³, HRDs face high levels of risk because of the work they carry out. In its annual report the Comité Cerezo³⁴ stressed that Guerrero is the state with the highest level of extrajudicial murders of HRDs in the country, with eight victims in 2017. In addition, and as a consequence of the closure of spaces faced by HRDs in Guerrero, the National Network of Civil Human Rights Organisations: All Rights for All (Red TdT)³⁵ declared a State of Alert for HRDs in the state of Guerrero³⁶.

Following the declaration, and jointly with other human rights organisations including the José María Morelos and Pavón Regional Human Rights centre (Centro Morelos), the 'Tlachinollan' Human Rights Centre (organisations that are accompanied by PBI), the Collective against Torture and Impunity – CCTI, the Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Centre, SERAPAZ, and Amnesty International Mexico, decided to organise the first Civil Observation Mission to Guerrero³⁷, which visited Chilapa and Chilpancingo, and which PBI accompanied.

In Chilapa, the region where the Centro Morelos is based, the Mission found that recent years have been marked by a constant and continuing upsurge in violence.

Grave human rights violations have occurred, including executions³⁸, forced disappearances, mass enforced

displacements and an overall increase in insecurity. In 2017 public transport was suspended for significant periods as were classes in all state schools³⁹ – despite a significant security force presence in the area⁴⁰.

On 28th November 2017 the members of the Mission met in Chilpancingo with the State of Guerrero's Interior Minister and several high-ranking officials in order to present their well-documented findings on the grave human rights violations in Chilapa and to stress the need to attend to victims and ensure they have access to justice. PBI, which took part in the meeting, expressed its profound concern at the situation of risk facing HRDs in the state, and also highlighted the importance of maintaining open channels of communication between high level officials and civil society organisations.

The Mission succeeded in raising local, national and international awareness of the human rights crisis in Guerrero, and of the work carried out by HRDs, especially in the central and mountain regions in which the Centro Morelos and 'Tlachinollan' operate under adverse circumstances. It was also able to illustrate the national and international backing that HRDs in the zone receive. After the Mission ended, in October 2017, a member of the Centro Morelos, a recipient of PBI accompaniment, was invited to participate in a delegation of Mexican human rights organisations to Canada that would involve meetings with Canadian civil society organisations, parliamentarians, media representatives and students at the University of York, Canada. Similarly, PBI helped another member of the Centro Morelos to participate in a tour of Europe, organised by the Red TdT, during which they met with members of the European Parliament (MEPs). Following this meeting, the MEPs communicated their concerns about the human rights situation in Guerrero to the president of Mexico and the State Governor⁴¹.

As follow-up to the Mission and to the dialogue established as a result of its activities, PBI travelled to Guerrero in October 2017 and met with the local and state authorities that are vital if the situation of extreme violence is to be resolved peacefully. In these circumstances, PBI will continue to express its concern and to highlight the grave situation in Chilapa, calling on the authorities to fulfil their duty to protect HRDs and the inhabitants of the zone.

³³ Guerrero is one of the states with the highest levels of violence, with an average of 7.4 voluntary manslaughter every day – see article of the Huffington Post (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2M2yAGc>

³⁴ Comité Cerezo México “MÉXICO 2017: 48 Defensores de derechos humanos ejecutados extrajudicialmente” (available only in Spanish) <https://www.comitecerezo.org/spip.php?article2936>

³⁵ The Red TdT is composed of 84 human rights organisations in 23 of the country's states. Red TdT “Alerta Defensa DH”

³⁶ Red TdT declara Alerta para personas defensoras del Estado de Guerrero y anuncia Misión de Observación” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2lj3M8F>

³⁷ Centro Morelos “Se realiza la primer misión civil de observación a Chilapa” <http://bit.ly/2jY21IL>

³⁸ Chilapa has the second highest rate of voluntary manslaughter in Mexico <http://bit.ly/2td7pRW>



Meeting of victims in Chilapa during the Observation Mission, Guerrero © PBI México © PBI México

³⁹ RedTdT “Inaceptable y grave el recrudecimiento de violencia en región de Chilapa: Misión de Observación” <http://bit.ly/2tlpeha>

⁴⁰ OHCHR “Mexico draft security law threatens rights and should be rejected, UN rights experts warn” <http://bit.ly/2lt0kIV>

⁴¹ El Universal “Urge Unión Europea a proteger a activistas” <http://bit.ly/2MHHuKu>

Coahuila: PBI accompanies truth and justice initiatives promoted by the families of victims of disappearance and by human rights organisations

In response to the increased levels of violence in the state of Coahuila since 2009, which has resulted in grave human rights violations and mass disappearance, the Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Centre for Human Rights (FJdL)⁴² has concentrated on raising awareness of the situation and of the demands of victims and family members of the disappeared.

As a result of the advice and accompaniment provided by the FJdL to the Collective of Families: United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila (FUUNDEC-M)⁴³, and as a result of its intense advocacy activities, a process of dialogue was initiated with state and federal authorities concerning the creation of a normative framework and the implementation of state-level public policies that would tackle the phenomenon of forced disappearance appropriately, consistently with international protocols. As a result, and with the support of other civil society organisations, the Law for the Declaration of Absence in Cases of Disappearances was passed in 2014⁴⁴.

In 2012, the Autonomous Work Group (GAT)⁴⁵ was created in Coahuila with the aim of monitoring the recommendations⁴⁶ of

the UN Committee against Forced Disappearances⁴⁷ and to act as a mediating body between the state government and the family members of the disappeared. Since 2014, PBI has accompanied the FJdL regularly in hearings involving the State Governor, the GAT and the organisations of family members in the hope of ensuring the continuation of the process and fulfilment of their working agendas. Similarly, PBI has raised its concerns about the human rights situation in the state with the international community.

According to the Special Report on the Disappearance of People and Clandestine Mass Graves⁴⁸ produced by the National Human Rights Commission⁴⁹, up to April 2017 there had been 1,871 victims of forced disappearance in the state of Coahuila⁵⁰. As a measure intended to deal with this phenomenon and a result of the existing processes of dialogue, in December 2016 the State Law for the Location, Recuperation and Forensic Identification of Persons was passed⁵¹. The law was intended to identify the 458 unidentified

⁴² <http://www.frayjuandelarios.org/>

⁴³ <https://fuundec.org/>

⁴⁴ See the text of the law at: <http://bit.ly/2t5PcG3>

⁴⁵ <https://fuundec.org/gta/>

⁴⁶ Comité contra la Desaparición Forzada “Observaciones finales sobre el informe presentado por México en virtud del artículo 29, párrafo 1, de la Convención” <http://bit.ly/2MC20M1>

⁴⁷ Committee on Enforced Disappearances <http://bit.ly/2tiBu2O>

⁴⁸ CNDH “Informe especial de la Comisión nacional de los derechos humanos sobre desaparición de personas y fosas clandestinas en México” <http://bit.ly/2um8Tc5>

⁴⁹ <http://www.cndh.org.mx/>

⁵⁰ CNDH “Informe especial de la Comisión nacional de los derechos humanos sobre desaparición de personas y fosas clandestinas en México” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2um8Tc5>

⁵¹ Ley para la Localización e Identificación Forense de Personas del Estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza <http://bit.ly/2MHISwG>



Forum “The rights of victims of disappearances of persons in the Inter-American system”, Coahuila © PBI México



Forum "The rights of victims of disappearances of persons in the Inter-American system", Coahuila © PBI México

bodies that have been discovered hitherto in the State of Coahuila and recover those that are yet to be found⁵². In order to support this advance, and contribute to its success, PBI has emphasised the importance of implementing all the procedures set out in the law, and of ensuring both the security of the family members of victims but also – by establishing dialogue with different state authorities – their active participation.

On 11th November 2017, during the sixth meeting of the Forensic Coordination Round Table⁵³ the decree creating the 2018 Exhumations and Forensic Identification Plan was passed, as provided for in the State Law⁵⁴. The Plan was a response to the demands made by family members to deal with the challenges that face the state in cases of disappearance and with the importance of its recognising its duty to ensure that appropriate mechanisms are in place to guarantee effective efforts are made to discover their whereabouts. The elaboration of the Plan required the participation of the FJdL, FUUNDEC-M, and other Coahuilan organisations⁵⁵, as well as the Office in Mexico of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the International Committee of the Red Cross. This case shows how incorporating civil society contributions can lead to improved laws and policies.

Dolores Soto, representative of the GAT and advisor to FUUNDEC-M, argued that “it is very important that international organisations like PBI accompany and monitor a process as important as the Exhumations Plan”.

During 2017 the FJdL produced several highly significant reports on disappearance, legislation, crimes and different human rights violations⁵⁶. Of particular significance was the report presented jointly with the International Human Rights Federation to the International Criminal Court, requesting the opening of an investigation into crimes against humanity allegedly committed in Coahuila between 2009 and 2016⁵⁷. In addition, together with the Human Rights Clinic at the University of Texas, FJdL published the report “Control... Over the Entire State of Coahuila”⁵⁸, which gathers testimonies that were provided during different state trials in the US, and highlights the grave human rights violations that have occurred in Coahuila.

The defamatory statements, surveillance and declarations⁵⁹ made against the FJdL in response to these publications constitute a warning about the increased levels of risk faced both by members of the FJdL itself and by the organisations of family members. For this reason, PBI has reinforced its protection and security strategy, through physical accompaniment, local, state and federal-level advocacy, and has strengthened its international support network.

PBI will continue to accompany the FJdL, carry on with its ongoing activities and develop new accompaniment strategies that take into account emerging processes in Coahuila, such as international monitoring of the State Exhumations Plan. We hope in this way to continue contributing to strengthening the possibilities of action open to the FJdL and the families it accompanies. Furthermore, we will continue to argue for the inclusion of family members in processes to combat impunity and demand truth and justice.

⁵² Respuesta del Estado de Coahuila de Zaragoza al informe: “Atrocidades innegables. Confrontando crímenes de lesa humanidad en México” publicado por Open Society Foundations (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2K1mpfi>

⁵³ The Forensic Coordination Round Table, described in articles 41, 42 and 43 of the state of Coahuila’s Law for the Location, Recuperation and Forensic Identification of Persons, is responsible for supervising and implementing the information management system and the State Exhumation and Identification Plan in cases that are already known, and those that will emerge as a legislation is implemented. See the text of the law at (available only in Spanish): <http://bit.ly/2llyDSk>

⁵⁴ Plan estatal de exhumaciones e identificación forense <http://bit.ly/2li7cbK>

⁵⁵ Grupo Vida, Familias Unidas en La Búsqueda y Localización de Personas Desaparecidas, ALAS de Esperanza y Asociación Internacional de Búsqueda de Desaparecidos en México.

⁵⁶ For more information see the following articles published (in Spanish) in 2017: <http://goo.gl/s8gdCa>, <http://bit.ly/2K4vRyv>, <http://goo.gl/LGx4h9>

⁵⁷ FIDH en colaboración con FJdL y Familias Unidas “México: Asesinatos, desapariciones y torturas en Coahuila de Zaragoza constituyen crímenes de lesa humanidad” <http://bit.ly/2t5PXPp>

⁵⁸ The Human Rights Clinic, The University of Texas School of Law “Control...Over the Entire State of Coahuila” An analysis of testimonies in trials against Zeta members in San Antonio, Austin, and Del Rio, Texas <http://bit.ly/2lg6dSL>

⁵⁹ Zócalo, “Denuncian atóxicos hostigamiento” (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2M4vNfx>

International Scrutiny

2017 saw several official visits⁶⁰ to Mexico by Rapporteurs from the UN and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). PBI was able to participate in and provide support to some visits by UN Rapporteurs, providing information on the patterns and tendencies affecting HRDs in Mexico. Similarly, with the aim of establishing dialogue and promoting links with international mechanisms, PBI facilitated meetings with communities and human rights organisations that on a day-to-day basis have little opportunity to meet key international figures. This enabled them to share their testimonies, context analysis and to formulate specific requests.

Michel Forst, the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders⁶¹, visited Mexico in official capacity in January⁶², travelling to the states of Guerrero, Oaxaca, Chihuahua and the state of Mexico. During the visit he met, among others, with groups of family members of victims, journalists, civil society organisations, indigenous communities and women HRDs. In total he met with more than 800 HRDs from 24 states of the Republic, including the organisations PBI accompanies and with different levels of authorities⁶³.

In his final report, Forst indicated that no significant advance could be made in the situation of HRDs while impunity continues to persist⁶⁴.

Furthermore, he stressed that the criminalisation of the defence of human rights has a negative effect, not only on HRDs but also to society as a whole, as it weakens social movements and dissuades people from lodging complaints about grave crimes. Therefore, there was a positive reception for the joint statement made by Rapporteur Forst and the Governing Board of the Federal Protection Mechanism, which recognised the role played by HRDs and called on all the authorities to eschew any and all acts of criminalisation, stigmatisation or intimidation⁶⁵. On numerous occasions, PBI has asked the Mexican government to organise public acts of recognition of the work of HRDs, as a preventive measure against violence.

During his visit, the Rapporteur participated in an exchange on risk and the protection of HRDs and journalists in Mexico⁶⁶, organised by PBI and the University of York's Centre for Applied Human Rights⁶⁷, as part of a research project "Navigating

⁶⁰ As well as those mentioned in the report official visits were also made by Léo Heller the UN Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights to Water and Sanitation (in May) and, in December, a joint visit by the UN and IACHR Rapporteurs on Freedom of Expression (David Kaye and Edison Lanza).

⁶¹ Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders <http://bit.ly/2H1LcGT>

⁶² OHCHR "Rights defenders: "Do they feel safe in Mexico?" – UN expert launches official visit to assess the situation" <http://bit.ly/2tm9awd>

⁶³ OHCHR "Mexico / Rights defenders: "The best way to protect them is fighting impunity" – UN expert" <http://bit.ly/2tkldYU>

⁶⁴ OHCHR "Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders on his mission to Mexico" <http://bit.ly/2kbD67>

⁶⁵ OACNUDH "Declaración conjunta del Relator Especial de las Naciones Unidas sobre la situación de los defensores de Derechos Humanos y la Junta de Gobierno del Mecanismo de Protección de Personas Defensoras de Derechos Humanos y Periodistas" (available only in Spanish) <http://bit.ly/2MGMILN>

⁶⁶ PBI "Michel Forst: Is there a safe and supportive environment for human rights defenders in Mexico today?" <http://bit.ly/2tmZnoS>

⁶⁷ <https://www.york.ac.uk/cahr/videos/>



Meeting of HRDs and Michel Forst, Oaxaca © PBI México



HRD and Michel Forst,
Oaxaca © PBI México

Risk, Managing Security, and Receiving Support”⁶⁸ run by the university. The meeting brought together 24 HRDs from the states of Colima, Chiapas, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Durango, the state of Mexico, Guerrero, Jalisco, Oaxaca and Mexico City, all of whom shared their experiences and proposals on the matter with the Rapporteur⁶⁹. The topics discussed included an analysis of the implementation of the Federal Protection Mechanism for HRDs and Journalists, an evaluation of the mechanism informed by the HRDs, and an integral approach to protection. On the Federal Protection Mechanism⁷⁰ the Rapporteur recognised that it was important it existed; however, he indicated that as a public policy it has failed to provide a favourable environment for HRDs. The Rapporteur’s visit coincided with the murder of the land and territory defender Isidro Baldenegro, a fact that led him to issue a communiqué condemning the incident and citing it as a further example of the difficult situation facing HRDs in northern Mexico⁷¹.

In November 2017, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples⁷² visited the country with the objective of “assessing the implementation of the recommendations made by [her] predecessor Special Rapporteur Rodolfo Stavenhagen in 2003, and to evaluate how Mexico has incorporated its international human rights commitments [in relation to indigenous peoples]”⁷³. During her time in the country the Rapporteur visited Mexico City

and the states of Guerrero, Chihuahua and Chiapas, meeting with indigenous communities, civil society organisations and different levels of government. “As members of indigenous peoples shared their problems and stories with me, I was able to recognise a serious pattern of exclusion and discrimination, which in turn reflects in a lack of access to justice, among other human rights violations”, noted the expert⁷⁴.

In her end of mission statement⁷⁵ she expressed her concern at the absence of respect for the rights to land, territory, autonomy and self-determination, the lack of political participation, self-identification, access to justice and the problem of violence and impunity. She also underscored her concerns about the application of the right of indigenous communities to consultation concerning which “[i]t has been repeatedly pointed out that consultation processes have not been prior in nature since decisions authorizing these activities have already been made [...] The information received indicates that the ineffective implementation of consultation processes has contributed to divisions and conflicts within indigenous communities”⁷⁶.

International scrutiny and support are vital if Mexico is to make progress on human rights. The country is quite open to visits by international mechanisms, but implementation of their recommendations remains insufficient and slow. This point is made by Rapporteur Tauli when she refers to the lack of progress in implementing the recommendations made by her predecessor in 2003.

The failure to deal decisively and integrally with the structural causes of the violence committed against HRDs remains palpably present. In the current context of violence and impunity, the protection needs of HRDs are high and require urgent response from all areas and levels of the Mexican government. In response, Mexican organisations have, through the Platform against Impunity and Corruption, echoed the first recommendation of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein in calling for the establishment of an Advisory Council that would act as an independent mechanism charged with investigating and punishing criminal acts carried out against them⁷⁷. For its part, PBI will continue working to its strengthen support networks and la facilitate these scenarios of dialogue between HRDs and key players.

⁶⁸ <https://securityofdefendersproject.org/>

⁶⁹ PBI’s note on the visit of Special Rapporteur Michel Forst <http://bit.ly/2tmr5Sz>

⁷⁰ <https://www.gob.mx/defensorasyperiodistas>

⁷¹ OHCHR “Outrageous and senseless: the murder of Isidro Baldenegro Lopez, a Raramuri environmental defender” <http://bit.ly/2MS4vui>

⁷² Biographical information - Victoria Tauli-Corpuz United Nations Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples <http://bit.ly/2McSr4Y>

⁷³ OHCHR “End of mission Statement by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on her mission to Mexico” <http://bit.ly/2uLPYU>

⁷⁴ OHCHR “Mexico must end pattern of discrimination against indigenous peoples – UN expert” <http://bit.ly/2yz7Ji6>

⁷⁵ OHCHR “End of mission Statement by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on her mission to Mexico” <http://bit.ly/2uLPYU>

⁷⁶ OHCHR “End of mission Statement by the Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples on her mission to Mexico” <http://bit.ly/2uLPYU>

⁷⁷ Presentación of the Platform against impunity <http://bit.ly/2t7ALRA>

PBI Mexico's finances in 2017

2017 has been a stable year financially for PBI Mexico. This has been made possible by the financial principles to which it adheres, namely: the pursuit of medium term financial sustainability, caution in the elaboration of work plans, and concentrating on dedicating most of its resources to protecting organisations and individuals working to protect human rights within Mexico. This stability meant it was possible to maintain the structure and principal activities of the project and to carry out specific strategic activities.

After 2016, a year that saw a reduction in its budget, PBI Mexico was able to recover financially during 2017 reaching an income of €443,000, an increase of 17% over the previous year and returning the project to the budgetary levels of previous years.

It is important to highlight the existence of new multi-annual donors. Currently, a quarter of the institutions or organisations funding PBI Mexico have made a two- or three-year commitment, permitting greater security and stability in the planning of the different activities it carries out.

Another positive indicator has been the alteration to a tendency that had appeared to be confirmed the previous year, during which PBI Mexico's donor base had shrunk significantly. In 2017 the project counted on 25 donors, an increase that we consider to be very positive. These donors include several

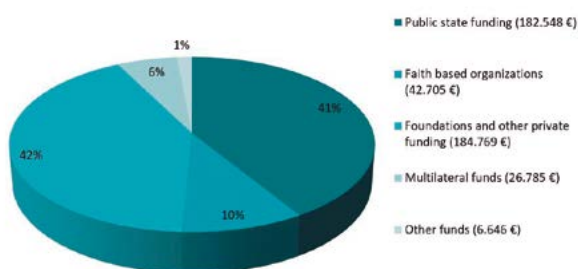
that support human rights work in Mexico through multi-annual contracts, others through specific contracts lasting a matter of months and some that provide unrestricted funds.

PBI Mexico pays close attention to evolving trends in global fundraising and is actively seeking new sources of income. PBI Mexico's objective for 2018 is to maintain its donor base and to increase the number of multi-annual grants it receives.

The project's provisional (unaudited) accounts for 2017 show a surplus, resulting from management both of the project as a whole and of its funds. PBI Mexico will dedicate this small surplus to maintaining its financial reserves as demanded by financial good practice in the NGO sector. The total final predicted expenditure will be a few percentage points above the original annual budget, because of a number of specific projects carried out during the year and some successful fundraising bids, which permitted some project activities to be strengthened.

To summarise, PBI Mexico was able to overcome some of the challenges of previous years, maintaining the support and protection it provides to HRDs. PBI Mexico thanks all the donors whose support has made it possible to maintain our work and activities during 2017.

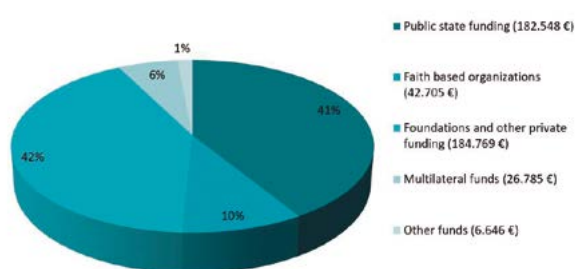
EXPENSES



PBI Mexico's structure was maintained during 2017 ensuring it was possible to continue accompanying HRDs and continue its several areas of strategic work in the country. Accompaniment and physical presence continue to be the areas to which most resources are dedicated.

** The financial data included in this report only include programme costs; they do not report losses resulting from exchange rate fluctuations or other accounting adjustments.*

INCOME



PBI Mexico's fundraising panorama has enabled the project to buck some of the negative trends observable internationally. Nevertheless, we are aware that these tendencies change very rapidly and that much hard work, and the support of our donors, will be required to maintain and strengthen our current activities.

** The financial data included in this report are provisional, and have not yet been audited. All the income and expenditure is presented in Euros.*



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:

www.pbi-mexico.org

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