

PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL



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INTERNATIONAL

Annual Review 2023



“

**PBI has enabled
us to continue
defending our
territory and our lives**

SANDRA CALEL

GUATEMALAN DEFENDER

”

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Words from our President

Dear Friends of Peace Brigades International,

Throughout the past year, our hearts have been heavy with the weight of loss and adversity, particularly among land, environmental, and Indigenous defenders who stand as guardians of our planet's precious resources. These defenders on the frontlines endure not only physical violence but also face defamation, smear campaigns, and psychological stress. In 2023, we commemorated the 25th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognised Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, commonly known as the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders – a pivotal milestone in our collective commitment to protecting those who courageously champion human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. As we reflect on this significant occasion, we recognise both the progress achieved, the formidable novel, and the persisting challenges.

Peace Brigades International (PBI) has stood firm in protecting and supporting these brave individuals amidst threats

and attacks for over four decades. As we commemorate the anniversary of the Declaration, we find it essential to spotlight the invaluable contributions of human rights defenders supported by PBI. As we report on our activities in 2023, we also endeavour to illuminate the work of human rights defenders around the globe whom PBI strives to support. Their stories offer profound insights into the realities, challenges, and triumphs that characterise their tireless efforts to promote and protect human rights. As we navigate the complexities of the present landscape and chart our course forward, let us draw inspiration from the firm resolve and strong spirit of these defenders. Together, let us renew our commitment to advancing human rights, safeguarding defenders, and forging a world where justice and dignity flourish for all.

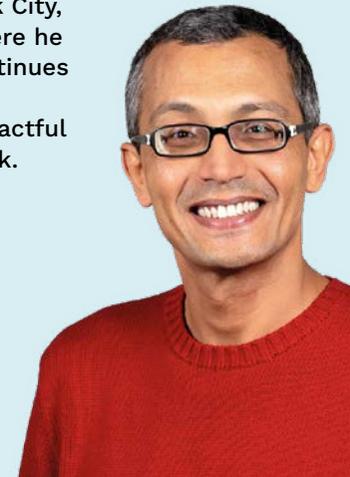
In Solidarity,



Fathi Zabaar

FATHI BAZAAR President

Fathi Zabaar, first and foremost, is a champion of human rights. As a Tunisian legal expert, he serves as Programme Director for the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, focusing on the Middle East, North Africa (MENA), and West Africa regions. Fathi leads initiatives that concentrate on human rights and transitional justice on both global and regional scales by collaborating closely with community-based organisations, delivering training and technical support in advocacy, strategic planning, and conflict resolution. Fathi, who holds a law degree and a master's degree in Conflict Transformation, is currently based in New York City, where he continues his impactful work.



PBI in a Snapshot

WHO WE ARE

Peace Brigades International (PBI) protects and empowers human rights and environmental defenders so that they can make changes in their communities and for our planet. We contribute to a robust civil society by building and sharing the tools, tactics, and networks necessary to prevent threats, reduce risk, and influence decision-makers.

WHO WE SUPPORT

Land, environmental, and Indigenous rights defenders

Land, environmental, and Indigenous defenders fight to defend their territories from activities such as mining, deforestation, industrial agriculture, and other forms of exploitation that threaten their livelihoods, cultures, and environments.



Defenders of women's rights and gender equality

Defenders promoting women's equality and gender equality play a crucial role in advocating for women's and LGBTQ+ rights while challenging harmful stereotypes. Women human rights defenders (WHRDs) and those of the LGBTQ+ community face specifically gendered backlash, discrimination, and violence.

Defenders working for peace, justice, and the rule of law

Defenders working for peace, justice, and the rule of law range from human rights lawyers to mothers looking for their disappeared children. They are dedicated to countering impunity and corruption within governmental systems to ensure that justice is accessible to all.



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**HOW WE SUPPORT:
HOLISTIC PROTECTIVE
ACCOMPANIMENT**

**Physical
Accompaniment**

A strategy pioneered by PBI. Our front-line teams embody the international human rights cause. They are physically present, accompany defenders in high-risk situations and deter potential perpetrators of violence.

SPOTLIGHT PBI in Colombia has an extensive network across the country in the most remote and dangerous areas of the country.



Capacity Development

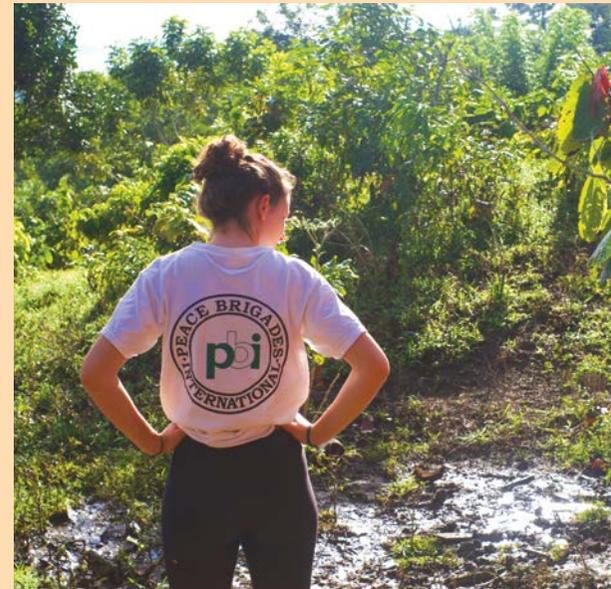
We share our tools and build upon our tested methodologies to provide training tailored to defenders' specific needs – from emergency response to long-term security policies.

SPOTLIGHT PBI in Kenya facilitated skill-building for HRDs from the Social Justice Centres (SJs) and participated in a Training of Trainers (ToT) on community organising. The participants are experienced community organisers from various SJs in Nairobi. This training helped them to improve their skills in analysing the community's situation with fellow community members and seeking solutions together.

Analysis of conflict

On-the-ground information enables us to carry out rigorous and objective analyses of the local human rights situation. We can thus offer tailored, effective and preventive protection.

SPOTLIGHT PBI has been developing a Southeast Asia Peace and Conflict Investigation Committee (SEAPEC). We have been developing a regional approach to support HRDs amid closing civic spaces to provide tailored security and wellbeing training to grassroots HRD groups, and amplify the voices of Southeast Asian HRDs globally.



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Awareness Raising

Letting people know about human rights work is key to enabling broad support. From puppet theatre to social media; from events and workshops to audiovisual formats – we want to make our topics accessible to everyone.

SPOTLIGHT PBI in Canada contextualises human rights work from around the world so that everyone can connect and understand the work of defenders on the ground, with an impactful social media presence that highlights our accompanied struggles.



Independent observation

Collecting first-hand information is vital to ensuring the effectiveness of our work. Our long-term presence gives us in-depth knowledge of the political situation in these places as it affects human rights defenders.

SPOTLIGHT PBI in Guatemala has been present within the Chinautla communities since 2018, where they have been defending these communities' right to be consulted on the activities of various sand extraction companies operating in their territory. We have seen the heavy machinery that has caused tremors leading to cracks in their houses, and heard directly from people living close to the road who have experienced respiratory problems due to the dust raised by passing vehicles.



Advocacy: At all levels

From local to regional to international – PBI's most visible activities include our governmental advocacy and trademark international presence in high-risk areas at critical moments. However, some of our deliberately invisible work is some of our most impactful: complex interventions to change the behaviour of violent state- and non-state actors, built upon the meticulous analysis that only strong localised relationships, trust, and access can bring.



SPOTLIGHT PBI in France helps coordinate advocacy tours connecting defenders with key actors from all parts of society to build a strong network for change.

PBI in Numbers



Our support has increased.
In 2023 we supported 3,493 human rights defenders, 68 organisations, and 950 communities globally.



We hosted an event **every 1.3 days** to support land, environmental, and Indigenous defenders; women's rights and gender equality defenders; and peace, justice and the rule of law defenders.



We have become even more international, with over **30 nationalities** represented across **6 continents**



On average, PBI offices welcomed **five human rights defenders' delegations** per month



On average **81% of human rights defenders** we support identify either as female or Indigenous



Our advocacy efforts have reached over **150,000 people** globally



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Global Priorities

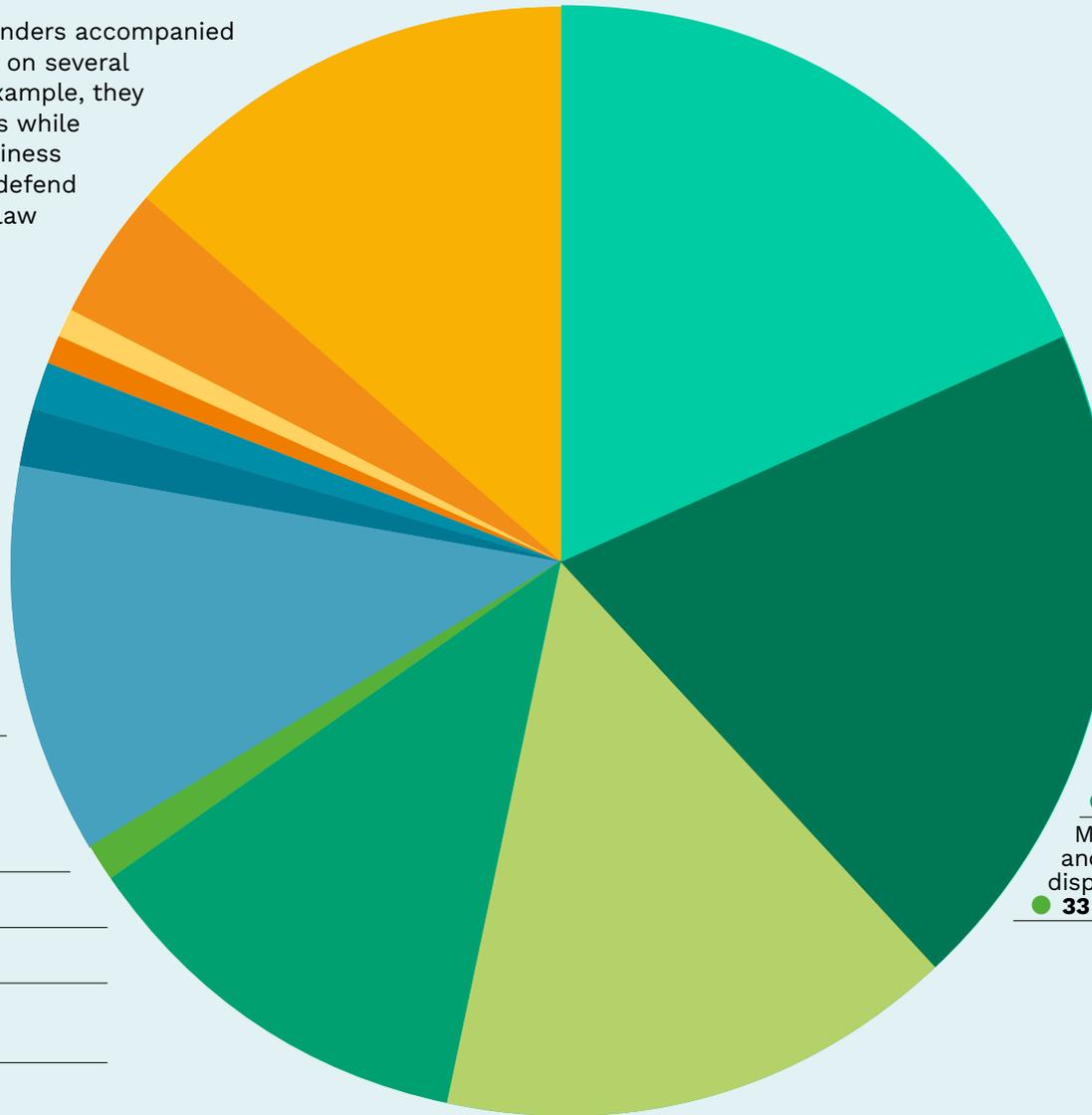
Globally, human rights defenders accompanied by PBI work simultaneously on several intersectional issues. For example, they defend their ancestral lands while demanding sustainable business models. Notably, they also defend democracy and the rule of law whilst fighting for equality.

Numbers of defenders working for peace, justice, and the rule of law

- Caste or ethnic Discrimination ● 23
- Democracy and rule of law ● 25
- Disappearance and enforced disappearance ● 106
- Impunity, justice, and criminalization ● 361

Numbers of defenders of gender equality

- Women rights ● 306
- LGBTQ+ ● 47
- Freedom of expression and association ● 35



Numbers of land, environmental, and Indigenous rights (LEI) defenders

- Business and human rights ● 499
- Land, territory and environment ● 530
- Indigenous peoples ● 410
- Abuses of law enforcement ● 322
- Migration, refugees, and internal displacement ● 33



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SECTION 1

Land, Environmental, and Indigenous Defenders

THE FACTS

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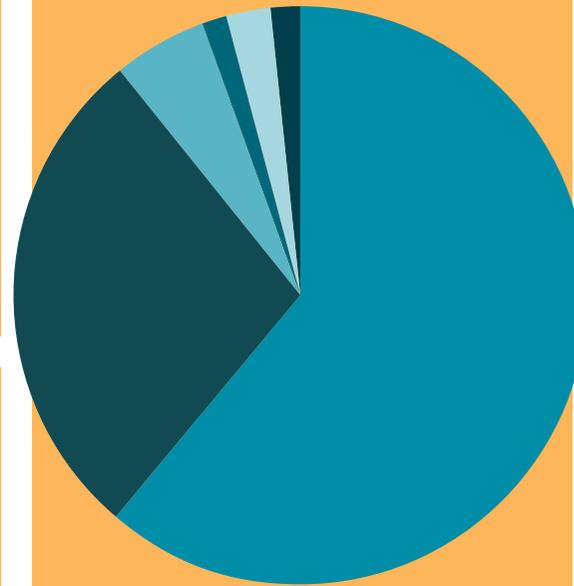


We accompany 1,327 land, environmental, and Indigenous defenders.

800



Over 800 people attended PBI's events in relation to land, environment and Indigenous peoples' rights.



LEI defenders by country

- Colombia 818
- Guatemala 374
- Honduras 67
- Indonesia 19
- Mexico 35
- Nicaragua 20

Land, Indigenous and environmental defenders play an important role in providing a future where the rights of the earth are protected. Their courageous work has been met with high levels of violence. Approximately 30% of all attacks on defenders are linked to extractive industries, and just last year 177 environmental defenders on the frontlines lost their lives. Land, indigenous and environmental defenders are struggling to protect the land on which their cultures and livelihoods depend. In some cases, pollution from mining threatens to seep into the land and water. In others, communities are forcibly displaced from their land to make room for development projects or monoculture plantations, condemning them to internal displacement. Nevertheless, others advocate for sustainable land use, striving to halt patterns of destruction for the benefit of future generations.

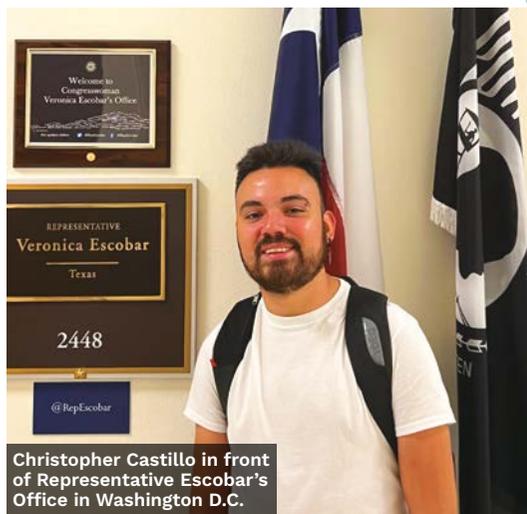


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Christopher Castillo Challenges Honduras ZEDES in Defence of Land Rights

THE DEFENDER

Christopher Castillo, the General Coordinator of the Alternative for Community and Environmental Claims of Honduras (ARCAH), is a leader in the movement against the Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDES). ARCAH is a social movement rooted in anti-capitalist, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, anti-colonialist and anti-classist positions, and seeks to defend territories and common goods from any project that threatens the peace and cosmovision of communities. Since its founding in 2017, members of ARCAH have fought against the



Christopher Castillo in front of Representative Escobar's Office in Washington D.C.

Jiniguare dam, the El Cortijo poultry company, the Zones for Employment and Economic Development (ZEDES) and other projects in Francisco Morazán, Comayagua, Cortés, and Olancho, always through resistance and permanent connection with the earth.

PBI's accompaniment and support is crucial and indisputable for ARCAH. We are very grateful to PBI for the advocacy done before the IACHR and their support in constructing a security manual for the organisation. PBI brings our voice to other scenarios and represents a counterweight to anti-rights discourses.

CHRISTOPHER CASTILLO

HONDURAN DEFENDER

THE ZEDES

ZEDES are zones that operate as independent territories within the country of Honduras.

However, they are not subject to Honduran law, creating an environment ripe for exploitation.

The three ZEDES within Honduras are located in Choloma, Orquídea, and Próspera. This new economic model threatens to envelop up to 35 per cent of the country. These developments would displace entire Afro-descent and Indigenous communities who have ancestral connections and rights to the land they inhabit. Christopher and fellow members of ARCAH have come under attack as voices leading the struggle against these zones, backed by some of the world's wealthiest and most powerful corporations.



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THE CHALLENGES

Honduras is one of the most dangerous countries in the world in which to defend land and territory, with more land defenders being murdered per capita than anywhere in the world.

There is a pattern of attacks against defenders of land and territory, attacks whose objective is to intimidate and weaken social processes that are working to defend human rights. Usually, these actions manifest as defamation, harassment, repression, criminalisation, and assassination of community leaders. In recent years, ARCAH's efforts to defend territories have played a crucial role in exposing alleged violations of human and environmental rights, notably in cases such as the ZEDEs, repealed in April 2022, and the El Cortijo poultry company in Loarque, located south of Tegucigalpa, among others. ARCAH's advocacy work, however, has also led to smear campaigns, attacks and criminalisation processes against members of the organisation.

HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

Since September 2022, PBI in Honduras has accompanied ARCAH, providing tools for internal organisational strengthening through workshops on security, protection, and self-care.

In May 2023, PBI in the USA coordinated seven meetings for Christopher with State Department officials, congressional aides, and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR). Subsequently, in July, PBI set up a meeting in the USA between Christopher, his lawyers, and the IACHR. He, thus, detailed the onslaught of attacks that ARCAH members and himself had experienced, prompting a plea for protective

measures. The IACHR granted protective measures to Christopher and ten other members of ARCAH. Later in 2023, Christopher participated in an advocacy tour of the United States organised by PBI. This set of activities has had positive consequences, reducing the risks faced by the organisation, and expanding its support network beyond Honduras.

During his October speaking tour to DC, Christopher met with Mary Lawlor, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders through PBI Washington. After PBI Washington sent follow-up information, she issued a tweet urging the Honduran government to guarantee his safety.

“
Every revolution
implies solidarity and
sharing; you are good
revolutionaries.

CHRISTOPHER
CASTILLO

OCTOBER 2023



Christopher Castillo and Mariana Azucena Villarreal Fría in front of the OAS in Washington D.C.

Standing Strong: Mexican Indigenous leader Mariana Azucena Villarreal Fría Confronts Illegal Logging and Displacement

THE DEFENDER

Mariana Azucena Villarreal Fría is Director of the Network in Defence of Indigenous Territory in the Sierra Tarahumara (REDETI) in Chihuahua, northern Mexico. REDETI works against the forced displacement of Indigenous communities by criminal networks.

Since 2011, REDETI has collaborated closely with the approximately 6,000 Indigenous people of the Ralámuli and Ódami communities, striving for the legal recognition of their ancestral territories. This endeavour supports the claim of the Sierra Tarahumara peoples to the natural resources on their territory. This network includes the Sierra Madre Alliance (ASMAC) and the Community Technical Consultancy, A.C. (COMTEC). Both partners are dedicated to halting logging activities and safeguarding over 50,000 hectares of forest in Indigenous territories.

Illegal Logging and Forced Displacement

The state of Chihuahua's importance to the Mexican drug trade stems from its strategic geographical location and climate for drug cultivation. Unfortunately, illegal logging and trade have become one of the biggest causes of deforestation in the area. Not only do these groups enter and exploit the land without prior consent or consultation with the Indigenous peoples,



UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders Mary Lawlor with Defender Mariana Azucena Villarreal Fría accompanied by PBI Mexico.

but they often intentionally burn large sections of the forest to cover their actions, putting communities and wildlife at risk.

In Mexico, 31 Land, Environmental and Indigenous Defenders were murdered for their work in 2022. Since 1966, at least 22 people have lost their lives defending the forests and ancestral lands in the Sierra Tarahumara region. One of these brave individuals was Julián Carrillo, who was murdered for his work. On the 5th anniversary of Julian's murder, Mariana Azucena called for justice. She also highlighted the importance of legislation safeguarding Indigenous rights that protect their right to free, prior, and informed consent; essentially, laws that protect communities' right to give or deny consent for proposed projects that will impact the community and territory occupied by Indigenous communities. Not only does this consent need to be given without coercion but it must always be confirmed before said activities begin. Additionally, communities have the right to know the full range of potential impacts on their community and land.

REDETI CALLS FOR CHANGE THROUGH THE FOLLOWING ACTIONS:

- ▶ **Reform of the Law on the Rights of Indigenous and Afro-Mexican Peoples**
- ▶ **Passage of the Law to Prevent, Attend to, and Provide Reparations for Forced Internal Displacement**
- ▶ **Approval of an Action Plan to Stop Illegal Logging in Chihuahua**
- ▶ **Response from the Mexican state to IACHR requests for information on cases in the Sierra Tarahumara**

HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

In October 2023, PBI in the USA and PBI in Mexico organised and accompanied a delegation including Mariana and Christopher. The delegation participated in 15 congressional meetings and held discussions with the IACHR, USAID, and the State Department. PBI in Canada also accompanied Mariana to meet with the Canadian Ombudsperson for Responsible Enterprise (CORE), the federal government minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, and officials from Global Affairs Canada (GAC). One congressional office, at Mariana's suggestion, sent a tweet on the fifth anniversary of the killing of Raramuri Indigenous Defender Julian Carrillo in Mexico.



▶ **PBI in Mexico** has worked to reach increasingly isolated and dangerous areas to best accompany COMTEC. The organisation mentions that PBI's accompaniment has modified people's perceptions of security about the risks they face daily. Specifically, after the security workshops, the people accompanied have improved how they document threats to their land and community

facilitated by having access to new tools that empower them in their work of defending not only their human rights but ensuring that their collective territorial rights essential to their Indigenous communities are guaranteed.

▶ Amidst the highly violent conditions in the northern regions of the country and the security incidents experienced during the reporting period, ASMAC emphasised that PBI's accompaniment facilitated swifter emergency responses and improved communication with local and federal authorities.



Justice Prevails for Carlos Choc, Maya Q'eqchi' Journalist Acquitted of False Allegations

THE DEFENDER

Carlos Ernesto Choc Chub, a Q'eqchi' community journalist, documented in 2017 the repression exercised in Estor, Izabal against a peaceful protest of fishermen in which one of them was killed.

The reason for the protest was the contamination of Lake Izabal due to nickel mining developed in the hills near the indigenous communities. For decades, nickel mining in the Izabal region has caused environmental pollution, excessive police violence and the criminalisation of journalists and human rights defenders. In 2022, PBI came into direct contact with Carlos Choc as part of the accompaniment of the human rights law firm Centro para la Acción Legal en Derechos Humanos (CALDH), which took on the defence of the fishermen and the journalist. Between 2019 and 2022, Carlos Choc's investigations into the actions of the mining company and its impacts on the Q'eqchi' communities were disseminated through the Green Blood and Mining Secret projects of the Forbidden Stories network of international journalists.

THE CHALLENGES

Due to the high profile of his investigations and their international dissemination, Carlos Choc suffered a raid on his home and had to go into hiding for some time to avoid further attacks. He also experienced surveillance, harassment and criminalisation by the mining company in collusion with the Guatemalan state. For these reasons, PBI provided him with international accompaniment tools to reduce risks and sought a solution to his criminalisation case.

Between 2017 and 2024, Carlos, along with three members of the Gremial de Pescadores Artesanales, faced a judicial process, being accused of illegal detentions during the aforementioned demonstration.

For seven years, the defenders' freedom was limited, and they had to comply with alternative measures. They had to appear before the court every 30 days and could not approach the mine or its workers. On 31 January 2024 the judge dismissed the charges for lack of evidence, leading to a celebratory moment for Indigenous journalists reporting on illegal mining.

“

The tours to Europe that I have made with the support of PBI and the contact with the European Union parliamentarians have been beneficial for my work and the struggle in favour of the rights of the Q'eqchi' people of El Estor

CARLOS CHOC

GUATEMALAN DEFENDER

”



Carlos Choc with colleagues after being acquitted of false charges in Guatemala



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HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

In 2023, PBI facilitated a delegation for Carlos Choc to Switzerland. The journalist gave an account of the attacks on press freedom that he experienced and spoke about his case at two events in Bern. He also met with representatives of the FDFA and the UN in Geneva.

After Choc's visit, the UN addressed three public letters to the Swiss and the Guatemalan government and the Solway company.

PBI disseminated letters, public statements, and social media posts. PBI's broad international support network gave the journalist a platform to share his situation and that of the Q'eqchi' communities of El Estor. His accounts reached the Subcommittee on Human Rights of the European Parliament (DROI), Government and Parliament representatives and the European Union. These spaces, and the subsequent follow-up work carried out by PBI through the updating of information and requests for direct protection actions in favour of the journalist, made it possible for different parliamentarians

to bring public attention to the case on dates close to the judicial hearings.

Additionally, PBI engaged with Michel Forst, Special Rapporteur on Environmental Defenders, linked to the Aarhus Convention. As a result, the Working Group on Business and Human Rights addressed letters to the

Swiss government, the Solway company, and five other United Nations special rapporteurs. They also sent letters to the Government of Guatemala, expressing their concerns and requesting respect for international conventions.

This hard fought struggle came to an end

in January 2024, when the unjustified criminal proceedings against Carlos were finally dropped. In cooperation with international organisations such as Franciscans International and the International Service for Human Rights, PBI has consistently raised awareness among the Human Rights Council's member states regarding the challenges to democracy in Guatemala. As a result, adequate information reached the capital through the permanent mission's staff and statements were made at the Human Rights Council session by the European Union, UK, and Switzerland. Several Ministries of Foreign Affairs travelled to Guatemala on the 14th of January to support the democratic transition.

ALERT

CARLOS CHOC, AN INDIGENOUS MAYA Q'EQCHI' HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDER AND JOURNALIST, FACES CRIMINALIZATION FOR INVESTIGATING THE CONTAMINATION OF LAKE IZABAL AND ITS EFFECTS ON LOCAL COMMUNITIES.

ON 31 JANUARY, HE WILL HAVE TO APPEAR IN COURT - AN ATTEMPT TO SILENCE HIM.

ACT NOW AND CALL TO STOP THE CRIMINALIZATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS IN GUATEMALA!





PLEASE SHARE

 **GUATEMALA**

CARLOS ERNESTO CHOC CHUB





“We Are Not Trespassers: This Is Our Land”: Fact-Finding and Legal Analysis Report on Agrarian Conflict Affecting Indigenous Communities in Guatemala

At the request of Indigenous leaders concerned about threats to the rule of law and the rights of rural communities, PBI in the UK organised a high-level legal delegation to Guatemala in March. Human rights lawyers from the UK, Brazil, Peru, and the US met with numerous NGOs, visited Indigenous communities and met with jailed human rights defenders. The delegation engaged with Guatemalan authorities, the diplomatic community and the private sector. In an initial press conference, the delegation called for urgent action to protect Indigenous peoples and expressed grave concern at the impact of violent forced displacements. Subsequently, they successfully advocated for Guatemalan authorities to stall planned evictions of Indigenous communities. In August 2023, Guatemala’s democratic institutions came under increased pressure from vested interests opposing the rule of law, following the unexpected election of progressive candidate Bernardo Arevalo as President. PBI’s team went on high alert and continued protecting the communities and NGOs, denouncing threats to the rule of law.

In October, the legal delegation published their report. They carried out international advocacy campaigns with Indigenous leaders in London, Brussels and Washington D.C. This resulted in successful efforts from various

governmental and non-governmental actors directed at Guatemalan authorities. These efforts urged the authorities to ensure a peaceful democratic transition, cease plans to forcibly evict Indigenous communities, and ensure that respect for Indigenous rights is on the agenda of the Arevalo administration. With a new government, the lawyers are now working with PBI and local defenders to engage the diplomatic community and keep the momentum up.

Additionally, PBI UK hosted an event featuring Indigenous leaders Lesbia Artola and Sandra Calel, who are defenders accompanied by PBI in Guatemala. Lesbia leads the Comité Campesino del Altiplano (CCDA), fighting for access to land and labour rights for the Indigenous Mayan Q’eqchi’. Sandra is a Maya-Poqomchi Indigenous woman, an Indigenous environmental rights defender and one of the Verapaz Union of Campesino Organisations (UVOC) leaders.



PBI in the UK hosts panel discussion with Indigenous leaders Lesbia Artola and Sandra Calel



Christina Challis from PBI in the UK with Indigenous leaders Lesbia Artola and Sandra Calel during an advocacy delegation

They have been at the forefront of the fight for Indigenous land and women’s rights despite facing criminalisation, stigmatisation, attacks and death threats for their tireless work defending their fundamental rights. Furthermore, PBI UK addresses the increasing criminalisation of human rights defenders globally by preparing legal empowerment initiatives to support and connect human rights defenders with high-level human rights lawyers worldwide.



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In Anonymity: the Struggle of Land, Territory and Environmental Justice Defenders in West Papua, Indonesia.

THE DEFENDERS

Ataf and Jup, pseudonyms used for their safety, are human rights defenders advocating for the rights of Indigenous people in West Papua, Indonesia. Ataf and Jup represent Indigenous communities in West Papua, campaigning against human rights abuses and environmental degradation caused by foreign investments.

West Papua faces grave human rights violations, including displacement, lack of education, environmental destruction due to mining and palm oil industries, and military oppression. Ataf is an Indigenous journalist focusing on gender-related violence, economic empowerment, and ecological conservation. Jup is an activist who protects indigenous land rights and advocates for justice. Both face intimidation, limited access to conflict areas, and censorship.

HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

PBI in Indonesia has facilitated a series of 10 workshops with a group of 30 land, environmental, and Indigenous peoples. The aim is to create and strengthen defender networks. PBI facilitated Ataf and Jup's visit to The Netherlands, where they engaged with organisations

like IUCN, ActionAid, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. During their visit, they highlighted the situation in West Papua. Additionally, PBI organised events and discussions to amplify their voices, enabling them to advocate for international attention and support. Ataf and Jup emphasised the importance of awareness and solidarity in addressing the challenges in West Papua.



SECTION 2

Defenders of Women's Rights and Gender Equality

THE FACTS IN NUMBERS

Globally, PBI accompanies over 350 defenders who work for women's and LGBTQ+ rights.

MEXICO has 113 defenders working on these issues.

Over 700 people across the PBI network attended events on Gender Equality and Women's Rights.

GUATEMALA has 83 defenders working on these issues.

Mexico and Guatemala are the countries where most defenders of women's rights and gender equality have requested PBI's accompaniment.

Every day women and members of the LGBTQ+ communities around the world take action to promote equality, peace, and justice. Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) do the same work as their male counterparts. Likewise, they face many of the same challenges and threats. However, women face additional gendered obstacles, threats, and violence. In 2022, 17% of HRDs murdered were identified as women or trans women. In many societies women are not expected to speak out and challenge the status quo.



LGBTQ+ Defenders Championing Inclusivity in Honduras

THE DEFENDERS

In the face of adversity, the **LGBTQ+ Association Arcoiris of Honduras** stands as a beacon, tirelessly advocating for the empowerment and protection of the **LGBTQIA+ community's human rights**.

Within the association, the **Muñecas de Arcoiris** collective, composed of trans women, spearheads efforts to combat discrimination and uphold the rights of transgender individuals in Honduran society. The Arcoiris Association was founded in 2003 in Honduras. Their aim is to empower and inform the LGBTQ+ community on vital health issues and the defence and promotion of their human rights. PBI in Honduras has accompanied Arcoiris since July 2015, providing legal assistance in cases of human rights violations, organising events and training, coordinating regional campaigns, and advocating for more equitable laws. Additionally, the organisation is part of the Committee for Sexual Diversity in Honduras and the Coalition Against Impunity.

“ We are not asking for privileges; we are asking for our rights. we are asking to be given the guarantee of the same rights that all people in this country have. ”

GRECIA O'HARA

TRANS WOMAN DEFENDER



PBI in Honduras accompanies defenders marching for the rights of LGBTQ+ communities in Tegucigalpa

COUNTRY CONTEXT

Since the 2009 coup d'état, Honduras has witnessed a distressing escalation in violence against the LGBTQ+ community, rendering it one of the most dangerous places for individuals of diverse sexual orientation and gender identity. Between 2017 and 2023, the Catrachas Lesbian Network documented 238 murders of LGBTQ+ individuals in the nation, including 55 trans individuals. An alarming 90% of these cases are estimated to remain in impunity. Trans women, in particular, face a grave threat. In a 2021 landmark ruling, the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACHR) held the State of Honduras accountable for the trans femicide of the transgender defender, Vicky Hernandez, dating back to 28 June 2009. Notably, one of the directives issued by the IACHR Court urges Honduras to facilitate the official name change process for trans individuals.



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HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

In 2023, PBI in Honduras continued its support of trans women reporting acts of violence to the relevant authorities, including the Public Prosecutor's Office and the National Police. PBI's physical accompaniment has proven instrumental in fostering a sense of security among trans women, leading to improved treatment from officials and enhanced access to state institutions. Moreover, PBI maintains constant dialogue through diplomatic channels regarding civil registry reforms for adequate gender identity recognition as ruled by the Inter-American Court. These advocacy efforts serve to keep international attention on trans rights violations in Honduras and elevate the visibility of trans women human rights defenders, ultimately striving towards a more just and inclusive society.

PBI in Honduras accompanies defenders marching for the rights of LGBTQ+ communities in Tegucigalpa



PODCAST SPOTLIGHT

CARNE CRUDA: VOICES OF THE EARTH: BEING TRANS IN HONDURAS, MOCKERY, HARASSMENT AND RISK OF DEATH

In collaboration with the Spanish Radio Program Carne Cruda, PBI in Spain raised awareness of human rights defenders' work across the Americas. This episode is in partnership with trans-woman defender Grecia O'Hara who works with the communications of The Center for LGBTQ+ Development and Cooperation (SOMOS CDC), which is a non-governmental organisation founded in 2007. They aim to develop programs and projects to improve the quality of life of LGBTQ+ people in Honduras and the Central American region. Grecia discusses what it is like being a trans-women in her country, including the decision to stay and make positive changes in her country – knowing it means risking her own life.



From Kibera to Kilifi: ToolKit for Women Human Rights Defenders in Informal Settlements

THE DEFENDERS

Judith Odhiambo Ochieng is a human rights defender, a paralegal and a passionate advocate for women's rights from Langata informal settlement in Nairobi, Kenya. She is also the co-founder of Langata Legal Aid Clinic (LLAC). Her human rights activism was inspired by her desire to change her experiences and those of others within the Langata and Kibera settlements. Growing up in Kibera, Judith witnessed the stark realities of gender-based violence (GBV) and human rights violations daily.

Judith Adhiambo Ochieng, a Kenyan WHRD from Lang'ata Legal Aid Center, Nairobi, where she advocates for women's rights



Perpetua Kariuki, a HRD from Kayole Community Justice Center speaking on how to improve the relationship between police and the community and reduce human rights violations



INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS

Nairobi, the capital city of Kenya, is home to a significant number of informal settlements, often referred to as slums.

These settlements have emerged due to rapid urbanisation, rural-to-urban migration, and economic disparities. Characterised by overcrowded living conditions, inadequate infrastructure, and limited access to essential water, sanitation, and healthcare services, slum dwellers face numerous challenges. Poverty is pervasive, with a high crime

rate and the lack of formal land tenure often leaving residents vulnerable to eviction and displacement. This context exacerbates the existing socio-economic hardships faced by communities in these impoverished areas where our WHRDs live and work, which makes it challenging for them to address human rights issues effectively. The fertile ground created by the context for human rights violations highlights the urgent need for holistic approaches to address systemic inequalities and promote social justice.



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HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

PBI in Kenya has been working with 15 WHRDs from Nairobi's five informal settlements: Kibera, Kawangware, Mukuru, Langata, and Mathare. In 2023, there was a significant transition, guided by insights from a comprehensive evaluation done in the year 2022, making it necessary for expansion in both geographical scope and target group engagement. PBI recruited a new cohort of 15 WHRDs in 2023, ten from Kilifi County on the Kenyan coast and five from the previous areas within the five settlements of Nairobi that were not reached. This year, 30 WHRD Toolkit Organisers were classified into two cohorts. Since 2016 PBI Kenya actively engaged in countering violence against women and children by creating the Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) toolkit organisers' network, and working very closely with the toolkit organisers, a group of 15 dedicated human rights activists who are living and working for their respective communities in the urban settlements of Mukuru, Langata, Kibera, Kawangware and Mathare.



Judith Adhiambo Ochieng', a Kenyan WHRD from Lang'ata Legal Aid Center, Nairobi, where she advocates for women's rights

Francis Sakwa, WHRD toolkit organizer from Mathare giving a security training refresher in toolkit organizers network



Resilience Rising: Empowering Women and Gender Minorities in Madhesh Province, Nepal

The 2015 Constitution of Nepal sends a clear message that all forms of discrimination and oppression will no longer be tolerated and provides a solid foundation for equal representation of women and marginalised groups in the political space. However, women still have to fight against discrimination and for equal rights – as survivors of sexual and gender-based violence, as single women whose children are denied citizenship because their father is not Nepali, as women breaking out of patriarchal and cultural norms. Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRDs) continue to be stigmatised and are constantly exposed to threats and economic challenges.

To counter this, the Peer Learning Network (PLN) has established itself as a safe and supportive space for WHRDs and survivors of human rights violations across the Madhesh province. By improving their skills on gender issues, holistic protection, networking, and advocacy, the PLN can increasingly raise their concerns with relevant authorities and other stakeholders for women's empowerment, visibility in public discourse, and building trust within the community. While many women used to work in isolation, through the PLN they now receive mutual support and organise joint advocacy events, such as on the occasion of International Women's Day and the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence.

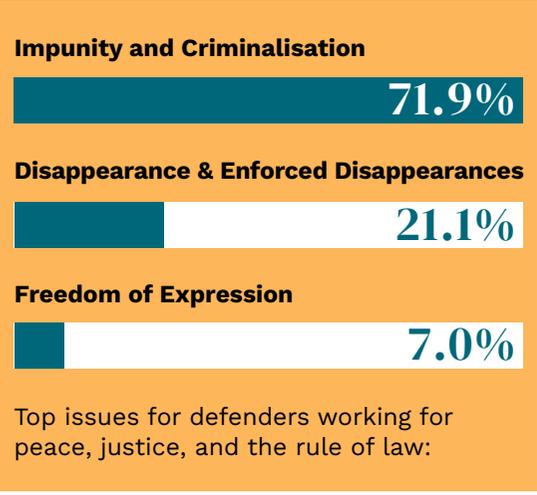


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SECTION 3

Defenders Working for Peace, Justice, and the Rule of Law

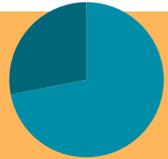
THE FACTS IN NUMBERS



Defenders working for peace, justice, and the rule of law are committed to ensuring equality, where all individuals, organisations, and even the state are equally accountable under laws justly applied and enforced. They strive to provide equal access to justice, ensuring everyone’s rights are protected. Transparency is crucial to their work, as they seek to uncover and disclose the truth about historic injustices, allowing victims to pursue effective remedies or compensation for their losses. These defenders advocate for the right to promote the rule of law and fight against impunity without fear of retribution, ensuring that potential attackers are held accountable for their actions.

1000

 Over 1,000 human rights defenders accompanied by PBI advocate for peace, justice, and the rule of law globally.

72%

 Human rights defenders who advocate for peace, justice, and the rule of law engage directly in advocacy against impunity and the criminalisation of their work, seeking justice.

2000

 During 2023, over 2,000 people attended PBI workshops and events on Peace, Justice, and the Rule of Law.



Women's Solidarity Leads to Milestone Bill #242 for the Protection of Forcibly Disappeared Victims Searchers in Colombia

THE DEFENDERS

Yanette Bautista established the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation, dedicated to safeguarding the human rights of women and families grappling with the harrowing enforced disappearance of loved ones in Colombia. The foundation bears the name of Yanette's late sister, Nydia Erika Bautista, who forcibly disappeared on 30 August 1987. Before Yanette's initiatives, Colombia lacked avenues for assistance in such matters, compelling her to forge her own path. However, her advocacy placed her in peril. Thus, Yanette endured eight years of exile and continued her human rights advocacy from abroad. Returning to Colombia in 2007, Yanette, under the protective accompaniment of PBI, continued her endeavours in her homeland. In 2022, Yanette brought her story to the Colombian Congress, where she helped introduce a bill aimed at aiding thousands of women akin to herself who are in search of their missing loved ones. This bill seeks to comprehensively recognise and safeguard the rights of women and people searching for victims of enforced disappearance.

CONTEXT

In Colombia, forced disappearances continue to be a persistent and horrendous crime rooted in the country's long lasting armed conflict. According to the Unit for the Search for Disappeared Persons (UBPD), the conflict in Colombia has left more than 99,000 people missing across the country. For the victims' families, an enforced disappearance is a living death. Family members exist within the paradox of not being able to mourn their dead but also not being able to hold them in their arms. Most of the

Following the debate on the Law for the Protection of Searching Women in the Chamber of Representatives of the Congress of the Republic PBI in Colombia and Defender Yaneth Bautista hold signs saying #LeyMujeresBuscadorasYa



“

Us, women, have shouldered the task that rightfully belongs to the state. Due to negligence, inefficiency, apathy or indifference, [the state] has failed to search for our missing people, so it is only up to us, the responsibility to undertake this task.

YANETTE BAUTISTA

COLOMBIAN DEFENDER

”

time, it is women, individually or collectively, who dedicate themselves to the search for their loved ones who have forcibly disappeared. However, the search for an enforced disappeared loved one is fraught with risks and dangers that these women navigate every day.



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HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

In 2023, Bill #242 was a significant milestone in PBI's advocacy efforts with Colombian authorities, the international community, and civil society, aimed at safeguarding Women Searchers, championed by FNEB which PBI accompanies and other organisations representing women and families of victims of forced disappearances. PBI has been and continues to be engaged in pushing for the approval of this legislation. Throughout 2023, we have actively participated in, facilitated, and advocated for various political initiatives, including garnering support from the international community. To this end, we have held meetings with several international entities, including the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), UN Women, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia, the International Committee of the Red Cross, 14 members of the European Parliament, as well as the Embassies of the Netherlands, Ireland, the United States, France, Germany, and the European Union. Additionally, we engaged with Caritas Germany, the Norwegian Fund, and OXFAM, among others. The collective pronouncements from these entities have been fundamental for the progress of the Bill in Congress.

“
Beyond the tangible effects of PBI's presence and accompaniment in Colombia, PBI support extends to emotional and psychological well-being.

REINALDO VILLALBE VARGAS

COLOMBIAN HRD



Yaneth Bautista of the Nydia Erika Bautista Foundation in the Chamber of Representatives of the Congress of the Republic of Colombia

MEMORY WORK

In 2023, we accompanied the Cacarica community as Colombia took steps towards reconciliation for the atrocities of Operation Genesis. PBI engaged in meticulous preparation and collaborative dialogues among various governmental ministries, including the participation of Colombian Vice-President Francia Márquez. These collective efforts have begun to shed light on the long-standing impunity surrounding these tragic events, prompting a nascent commitment from the State towards reparations.

In Bajo Atrato, we partnered with CIJP to honour the memory and bring back the remains of Isaac Tuberquia, a revered human rights defender from Curbaradó, whose life was taken away in 1997. Additionally, PBI joined in the search for the remains of Alfonso Ibáñez and later, in September, participated in the ceremony commemorating Antonio Quiñonez de Jiguamiandó. While these endeavours cannot rectify the injustices of the past, they offer some solace to the affected families.

The Lingering Shadows of Enforced Disappearances in Guatemala: 40 Years Searching for Luz Leticia Hernandez Agustin

VANISHED BUT NOT FORGOTTEN

Forty years have passed since the forced disappearance of Luz Leticia Hernández Agustin. She has not been forgotten, and her family continues to search for their beloved daughter and sister. Marta and Mirtala are walking a long and arduous road to find justice; their greatest hope is to get clarity on what happened to her and her whereabouts. Luz Leticia Hernández Agustin was captured and disappeared by

State security forces on 22 November 1982. She was detained for collaborating in the kidnapping of Mario Ríos, nephew of the de facto Head of State, Efraín Ríos Montt. It is feared that she was a victim of torture and extrajudicial execution at the age of 25. Her family has been tirelessly searching for her ever since. Along the way, they have met other families who, like them, experienced the forced disappearance of a loved one. Mothers, wives, sisters and relatives founded the Mutual Support Group (GAM) in 1984.



Sisters Marta and Mirtala and mother Valentina seek justice for the disappearance of Luz Leticia, Guatemala

The search for the truth about the disappearance of our sister Luz Leticia us constitutes an act of justice that should flood with hope the hearts of the families, who like us, have unjustly lost loved ones, inside and outside Guatemala because silence is one of the greatest accomplices of the murderers. Because the truth must come out so that history does not repeat itself.

MARTA AND MIRTALA
HERNANDEZ AGUSTIN

COLOMBIAN HRDS



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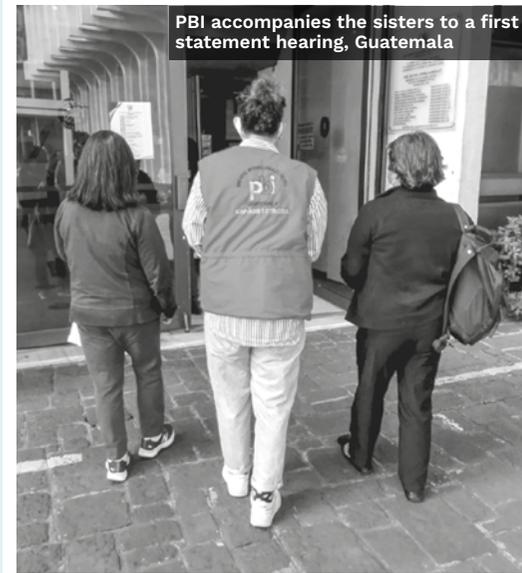
UPDATE

JUSTICE FOR THE AGUSTIN FAMILY

In January 2021, one year after the death of Jorge Hernandez, Luz Leticia’s father, the case entered the procedural phase. The main suspect is Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano, former commander of the Special Operations and Reactions Battalion (BROE). He was captured and brought to justice

for another case of mass disappearances, torture and other crimes against humanity (Diario Militar case).

Finally, in January 2023, a judicial process was opened for Luz Leticia. This time, Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano was indicted for the crimes of forced disappearance of Ana María and Luz Leticia, as well as crimes against humanity.



HOW DOES PBI SUPPORT THIS WORK?

Over the years PBI has provided a space for Luz Leticia’s family and the other families that are members of GAM to hold their meetings. In 1984 PBI offered their house for the weekly meetings of the group and GAM became PBI’s first accompanied collective. Moreover, PBI’s very visible and public presence in accompanying Luz Leticia’s sisters (Marta and Mirtala) and mother (Valentina), led to the first statement hearings for Luz Leticia’s case. The hearings had been cancelled several times in the previous six months before PBI’s accompaniment. In 2024, the family anticipates that the oral and public debate will take place and the defendant’s conviction.



Commemorating Key UN Declaration Anniversaries

In 2023, we celebrated 75 Years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which solidified the rights and dignity of every individual as the core pillar of the international commitment to human rights.

Last year we also celebrated 25 years since the creation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders, which recognised the value and legitimacy of defenders worldwide.

Despite this forward momentum towards peace, defenders continue to face contexts of intimidation, threats, and even attacks that have become commonplace. Despite it all, we have seen incredible resilience over the 40 years we have worked with defenders, and have continually pushed for more protections for those speaking out for what is right.

Here is a selection of three of our activities in 2023 around these important dates.

#1 PBI in KENYA accompanied defenders to an event hosted by the UN to speak with high-level regional delegates meeting with over 116 defenders. The defenders had an opportunity to learn about the functions and processes of the UN. They also gained a global overview of human rights issues and how to align their roles to claim better protection. The HRDs were excited about getting the opportunity to express themselves directly to the UN and explain the importance of domesticating international policies and laws.

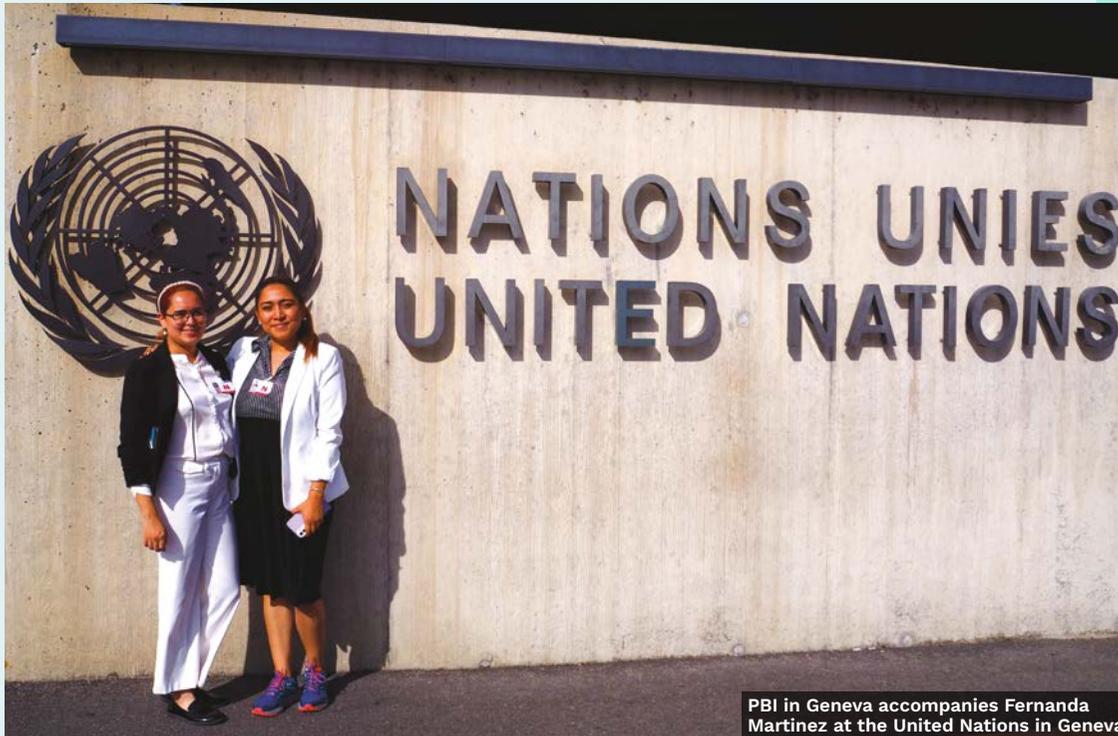


#2 PBI in THE NETHERLANDS partnered for the Shelter City Utrecht project with the Municipality of Utrecht. In 2023 they created a public and interactive photo exhibition in the main hall of the Municipality of Utrecht with portraits of human rights defenders who joined the Shelter City project and had come to Utrecht in previous years. The photo exhibition had over 500 visitors daily, ranging from students to community members, to learn more about human rights and their defenders and the project that builds upon physical protection and physiological support to strengthen their work. Visitors watched trailers of the mini-documentaries showcasing impactful lived experiences, and could write cards to the defenders. The participants gained deeper insights into the challenges they face and the impact of their work, fostering a greater understanding and appreciation for their efforts in promoting human rights.




Beyond Borders

NICARAGUANS IN EXILE DEFEND HUMAN RIGHTS



PBI in Geneva accompanies Fernanda Martinez at the United Nations in Geneva

THE DEFENDER

Fernanda Martinez is one of over 400,000 Nicaraguans forced to leave their country after the 2018 socio-political crisis.

Fer – as she is affectionately known – studied Law and International Relations. From a very young age she was involved

with the defence of human rights. She learned extensively from her role as a Civil Coordinator. She trained young activists, designed social advocacy campaigns, and represented the organisation in national and international articulation spaces.

When the police and paramilitaries began to repress young people demonstrating

during the April 2018 protests, she did not hesitate to demand their rights be respected.

As a result, Fer became a victim of persecution, harassment, and threats. At first, that persecution was directed at the Civil Coordinator post, until she felt it personally with surveillance around her house. To save her life and protect her family, she was forced to move to Costa Rica, where she requested political refuge and has been living for more than five years.

“

I have raised my profile thanks to PBI ... and have access to international advocacy forums to denounce the human rights violations that continue in Nicaragua, so that they will never again be forgotten.

FERNANDA MARTINEZ

NICARAGUAN HRD, NOVEMBER 2023

”



THE CHALLENGES

Arguing for human rights while in exile has been a road full of obstacles. For Fer, defending human rights from exile means promoting a culture of peace and respect for the fundamental rights of people in general without distinction; advocating for the rights of people who live in situations of vulnerability and oppression and thus cannot express themselves; and creating awareness of the importance of living in a more humane world. **Fer knew she couldn't do it alone, and founded the Red de Mujeres Pinoleras (REMUPI)** with a group of refugee women. It is an organisation inspired by the principles of Feminist Economics to continue defending the rights of women in exile while collectively building strategies for economic sustainability. REMUPI is a space for solidarity,

empowerment, the denouncing of violence, the defence of rights, and the promotion of Nicaraguan culture. Fernanda Martinez is one of the network's coordinators, and she works voluntarily. Her natural cosmetics business enables her to make a living in the host country, as she could not practise her profession for pay due to restrictions on recognising her qualifications – a situation she shares with other REMUPI defenders.



Fernanda Martinez at the United Nations on an Advocacy Tour

LEADING THE WAY FORWARD

Many challenges lie ahead. One of them is the continuous exposure to threats and political persecution. Fer worries about her family's danger because she denounces what she and women, in general, have to go through. Peace Brigades International has accompanied REMUPI since its establishment, both in organisational strengthening, psychosocial support for women human rights defenders, and political advocacy. Fernanda shares with us that ever since she graduated from International Relations, she has dreamed of pursuing a diplomatic career to defend human rights in international forums. That dream was cut short when she went into exile. **However, this year, she represented REMUPI on a global advocacy tour, accompanied by PBI, and was able to make a statement at the UN Human Rights Council to denounce violence against women in Nicaragua, so in a way, she fulfilled her dream, albeit in another role, as a defender.**



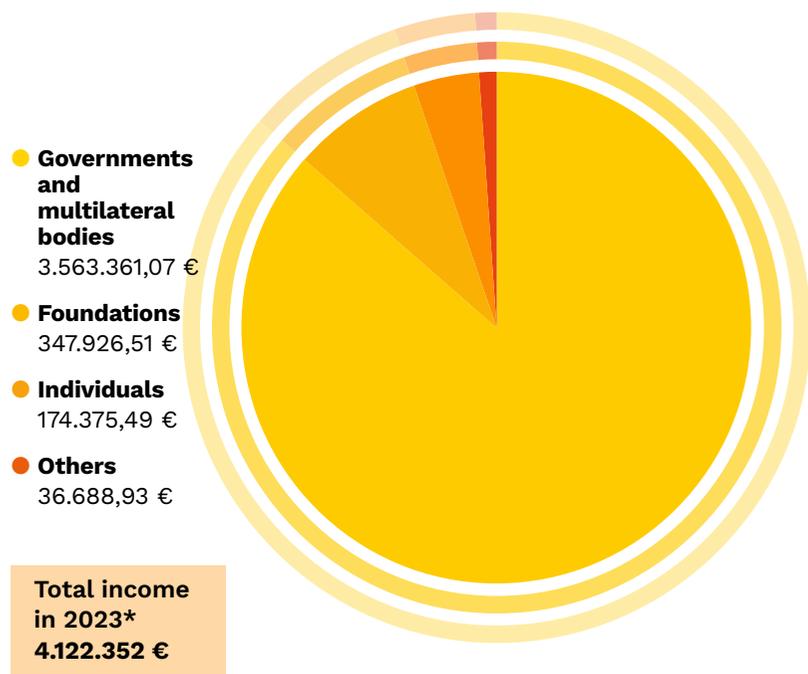
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Financial Summary

We would like to thank the many organisations and individuals who made generous contributions to our work throughout the year.

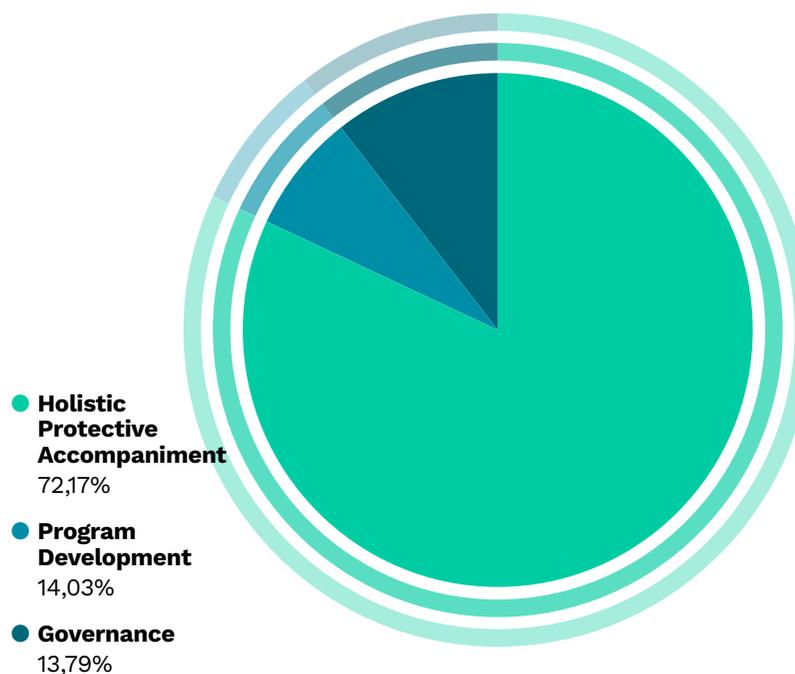
WHO FUNDS PBI?

Governments, multilateral funders, and dedicated individuals fund our work to protect defenders. Our staff works closely with our committed individual donors in Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Switzerland, the UK, and the USA.



HOW WE SPEND OUR MONEY

From every €1 you give us we spend 72 cents protecting defenders, 15 cents on developing new programs to expand our impact and the remaining 13 cents on ensuring best practice in organisational governance.



* All figures are in EURO and subject to final audit. This financial analysis does not include the accounts of those PBI offices which are separate legal entities.

Meet the PBI team

The volunteers and staff that make up the PBI Team come from many different countries and backgrounds. Whether in the field as PBI volunteers providing lifesaving support to HRDs, or in offices around the world advocating tirelessly for protection for HRDs, we share a commitment to the belief in the contribution that ordinary people can make to creating a more peaceful and just world.



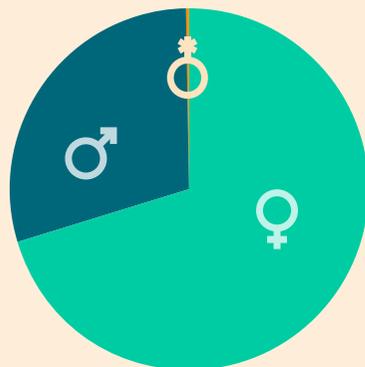
“
 A volunteer experience at PBI is a life experience. Because spending a year sharing daily life means being involved daily with work, emotions and feelings. To be a volunteer is to share life with people with different customs and ways of life; all for the same goal: the defence and protection of life and human rights. It is a reality that unites us, makes us overcome aspects of adaptation and to assume the role of volunteer protector of Human Rights
 ”



NÉLIDA

PBI HONDURAS VOLUNTEER, DECEMBER 2023

PBI MEMBERS BY GENDER



- 333 women
- 139 men
- 1 gender diverse

PBI MEMBERS BY NATIONALITY

Argentinian	Chilean	Greek	Norwegian
Australian	Colombian	Honduran	Peruvian
Austrian	Costa Rican	Hungarian	Portuguese
Bolivian	Dutch	Indonesian	Romanian
Brazilian	Filipino	Irish	Salvadorean
British	French	Italian	Spanish
Canadian	German	Kenyan	Swiss
		Mexican	United States
		Nepali	Uruguayan
		Nicaraguan	Zimbabwean

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Allan and Nesta Ferguson Charitable Settlement

AW60

Ayuntamiento de Barcelona

Ayuntamiento de Bilbao / Bilboko Udala

Ayuntamiento de Hernani / Hernaniko Udala

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Bertha Foundation

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BINGO! Die Umwelt Lotterie

Bischöfliches Hilfswerk MISEREOR e.V.

Brot für die Welt

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Christian Aid

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Gobierno de Navarra

Embassy of the Kingdom of Netherlands in Costa Rica

Embajada de Irlanda en México

Embajada del Reino de los Países Bajos en Costa Rica

Embajada de Noruega en México - Norges ambassade i Mexico

Engagement Global - Förderprogramm

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Gesamtkirchgemeinde Bern und
Umgebung

Gezamenlijke religieuzen in
Nederland via KNR – Projecten
in Nederland (KNR PIN)

Gobierno de Cantabria

Gobierno de Navarra

Guatemala Solidarity Network

Haëlla Stichting

Hartstra Stichting

Hilfe für Guatemala

Huisman Vredesfonds

Institut für Auslandsbeziehungen
(ifa), Funding Programme zivik

Jong Blad Stichting

Joseph Rowntree Charitable
Trust

Junta de Castilla y León

Katholischer Fonds –
Kooperation eine Welt

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Kirchgemeinde St. Gallen-Tablat

Kirchgemeinde Wallisellen

Kirchlicher Entwicklungsdienst
(KED)

LUSH Charity Pot

MAE Noruega –
Utenriksdepartementet Seksjon
for Fred og Forsoning

Mairie de Paris

Maya Behn-Eschenburg Stiftung

Ministère de l'éducation
nationale et de la jeunesse
français

Ministerio de Asuntos Exteriores,
Unión Europea y Cooperación,
Gobierno de España

Mirianog Trust

Misereor

Non Violence XXI

Network for Social Change

Oakdale Trust

Pan para el Mundo - Brot für die
Welt

Peter Opsvik AS (empresa
noruega de diseño) gaver til
allmenntyttige formål

Philamonic Trust

Protect Defenders - EIDHR

Raymond and Pamela Garrett
Trust

Samuel Rogers F

Secours Catholique Caritas -
France

Secrétariat de la Délégation
Genève Ville Solidaire (DGVS)

Service de la solidarité
internationale (SSI) du Canton
de Genève

Simmons & Simmons

Stiftung Umverteilen +
Landeszentrale für politische
Bildung Hamburg

Swiss Federal Department for
Foreign Affairs (FDFA)

The Tylour Foundation

The Tinsley Foundation

Trocaire

Treebeard Trust

Trefonen Hill Walk

The Troy Trust

Unifor

Unión Europea (European
Instrument for Democracy and
Human Rights)

Vfonds

Ville de Paris

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