

Peace Brigades International

in Mexico

PBI Mexico Project Bulletin

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Notes on the Current Situation

The U.S. Congress Approves the Merida Initiative

On October 22, 2007 President Bush presented the Merida Initiative to the U.S. Congress. This initiative, which originated in the Security and Prosperity Partnership of North America, will provide 1.4 billion dollars to Mexico and Central America during a period of three years in order to combat drug trafficking and organized crime. For 2008, Mexico was allocated 400 million dollars to invest in the armed forces and public security, and the remaining 65 million dollars were designated to Central America. Secretary of the Interior Juan Camilo Mouriño, together with President Felipe Calderón, signed an agreement to allow Mexico and the United States to share technology to prevent and detect terrorist threats and threats to national security.¹

The U.S. Congress stipulated that funding depends on the initiation of legal and penal reforms, ensuring that funded police and military units do not commit human rights violations, and that these units are free of corruption.² Secretary of the Interior, Juan Camilo Mouriño, has stated that Mexico will not accept conditions on the Merida Initiative since drug trafficking is not a unilateral problem. He said that the Initiative should guarantee Mexico's sovereignty and respect both Mexico and the U.S.'s internal legislation. According to Mouriño, incorporating measures or unilateral conditions on the Initiative would be contradictory and counterproductive, and therefore unacceptable.³

The United States Senate approved the Initiative on June 20, allocating 400 million of the 500 million dollars that the Bush administration had originally requested for the 2008 fiscal year. The version approved by the Senate has eliminated the most intrusive chapters that conditioned the funds on specific changes to the justice system. The new version puts conditions on 15% of the budget and obligates the Mexican government to report on public security activities to the State Department.⁴ The bill states that the State Department should work with the Mexican government, the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and non-governmental organizations to promote a respect for human rights by the police and military forces. It also states that corruption and impunity within the military and public security forces are concerning, and it points

out that recommendations by the National Human Rights Commission have been largely ignored and rarely result in punishment. However, legislators and governments of both countries have insisted on the urgency of passing the bill due to increasing violence linked to drug trafficking in Mexico, especially near the shared border.⁵

Mediation Commission between the Government and the Popular Revolutionary Army (EPR)

In previous months the federal government has been searching for ways to initiate dialog with commanders of the EPR. On April 24 the armed group indicated that they were prepared to talk, with the condition that the mediation process investigate the whereabouts of EPR members Edmundo Reyes Amaya and Gabriel Alberto Cruz Sánchez, disappeared on May 25, 2007 in Oaxaca City. The EPR requested that the dialog be carried out through a Mediation Commission composed of Bishop Samuel Ruiz, writer Carlos Montemayor, journalist and lawyer Miguel Ángel Granados Chapa, anthropologist Gilberto López y Rivas, and three members of the National Front against Repression, including Senator Rosario Ibarra, Enrique González Ruiz and Juan de Dios Hernández Monge⁶ who were instructed by the EPR to discuss the case of the two disappeared people. While this is the first time in history that the EPR has shown an interest in dialog, the EPR has warned that while they are interested in negotiating, they will not put down their arms and will not surrender. They did however agree to suspend all military actions as long as the mediation continues.⁷

On May 13, the Department of the Interior and the Mediation Commission met for the first time to establish the conditions and a process that would lead to a solution. The seven members of the Commission pointed out that from a civil society perspective, mediation is an important tool in order to attain justice, and to put an end to forced disappearances and crimes of humanity.⁸ In the second meeting on May 20, the Commission and the Department of the Interior talked about the two disappeared people and began to evaluate personal testimonies, documents, and political and legal analysis given to them by sectors of civil society.⁹ In their third meeting on June 13, the Mediation Commission gave the working group from the Department of the

Interior documents that detail reports from the families of the disappeared and examine the specifics of the crime of forced disappearance.¹⁰ The spokesman for the Commission, Carlos Montemayor, stated that they hope for a complete answer regarding these documents and indicated that the government was interested in listening, reflecting and dialoging – which is ultimately a positive sign.¹¹

Energy Reform and the Privatization of Pemex

The privatization of Pemex is a neoliberal economic project that has been in the works since President Felipe Calderón was in the Department of Energy during Vicente Fox's administration. This is an energy reform that allows for new possibilities in hiring contractors, allowing foreign companies to invest in PEMEX, and permits a combined effort to exploit areas in the Gulf of Mexico.¹²

Many sectors of society have been fighting against the energy initiative, including civil peaceful resistance movements in all states throughout Mexico, some congressmen and senators, as well as the members of the Permanent Forum of Legislators who are opposed to privatizing Pemex.¹³ The initiative to reform the oil industry has been discussed in 13 forums organized by the Senate. These reforms allow all political parties, academics and experts to have their voices heard and to analyze the problems in Pemex and propose solutions. Finally, a popular consultation was carried out on July 27¹⁴ in which more than 80% of the participants stated that they were against the federal government's initiative to privatize this industry.¹⁵

1 *La Jornada*, April 22, 2008

2 *CNNexpansión*, May 18, 2008

3 *Excelsior*, June 2, 2008

4 *El Universal*, June 21, 2008

5 *La Jornada*, June 20, 2008

6 *Proceso*, May 18, 2008

7 *La Jornada*, May 19, 2008

8 *La Jornada*, May 10, 2008

9 *El Periódico de México*, June 24, 2008

10 *Proceso*, June 22, 2008

11 *La Jornada*, June 14, 2008

12 *La Jornada*, April 10, 2008

13 *Proceso*, May 11, 2008

14 *El Universal*, June 30, 2008

15 *La Jornada*, August 3, 2008.

Legal Case against the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa People in Ayutla de los Libres

On March 31, four police officers and a worker for Opportunities were assassinated in an attack in El Salto (a community in the municipality of Ayutla). Staff of the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center reported that authorities immediately tried to associate the OPIM with this criminal act¹ and a few days later, there was a significant increase in police and military presence in the area. The State Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Guerrero (Coddehum) stated that the military checkpoints on the roads leading to the communities were unconstitutional and received several complaints regarding human rights violations by the military. Both politicians and civil society expressed doubts and criticism about the increased military presence; witnesses described the army's behavior toward the civil indigenous population in the region as hostile.² Armando Chavarría Barrera, Secretary of the Interior at the time, stated that it is not necessary to militarize the area because it only creates "anxiety and uncertainty."³



Wives of the five OPIM detainees receive an award during Tlachinollan Human Rights Center's XIV anniversary

On Thursday April 17, five members of the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa People were arrested at a checkpoint manned by both army soldiers and by police forces from the Federal Agency of Investigation (AFI), the Department for Public Security, and the Ministerial Police. The five people were detained while traveling from Ayutla to their community, El Camalote, on an arrest warrant issued on April 11 for the premeditated homicide of Alejandro Feliciano García, assassinated on December 31, 2007.⁴ The investigation into his death was stalled until his body was exhumed on April 10th – several hours later the criminal investigation was indicted, and 15 arrest warrants were filed against members of the OPIM.⁵

Lawyer for the detainees, Vidulfo Rosales Sierra from the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center, pointed out several irregularities in the investigation, and stated that the evidence is "based on suspicion and hearsay."⁶ The case file points to two people as the murderers of Feliciano García, and alleges that the rest of the 15 members of the OPIM were involved in planning the homicide.⁷

The detainees report being threatened by state and federal police forces who tried to oblige them to plead guilty. In addition, the judge tried to force them to provide their testimonies without a translator and without the presence of their lawyer.⁸ The fifteen people with arrest warrants were very active in the organization, including OPIM President Cuathémoc Ramírez Rodríguez, who receives PBI accompaniment. The detainees also include Orlando Manzanares Lorenzo, who led the

movement to defend victims of forced sterilizations, along with two nephews of Inés Fernández Ortega, who has reported being raped in 2002 by members of the Mexican Army.⁹

Several international organizations including Amnesty International, Frontline, the German Coordination,¹⁰ the Washington Office on Latin America (WOLA) and the Latin American Working Group (LAWG) expressed their concern about this case to the Mexican government and sent urgent actions and letters directed to both federal and state governments requesting that the OPIM's rights, safety, and physical integrity be protected. They also requested that "an independent, impartial and lawful" decision be made in the case of the five detainees and the other ten members of the organization with arrest warrants.¹¹

On July 7, lawyers from the *Tlachinollan Human Rights Center* presented a federal appeal to Livia Lizbeth Larumbe Radilla, Eighth Judge of the Acapulco District, appealing the ruling by the local judge in Ayutla de los Libres. In this appeal, the *Tlachinollan* staff were able to show that the judge's ruling is "illegal" due to a lack of evidence against the prisoners.¹² WOLA and LAWG have once again made a statement to the state government, asking that "authorities (...) act with impartiality and autonomy"¹³ during this appeal process.

Also on July 9, the Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) announced that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

(IACHR) extended precautionary measures to include 40 members of the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa-Tlapaneco People (OPIM/OPIT), in order to further protect their lives and physical integrity. This is the second extension of the precautionary measures that were originally granted in January 2005 following threats suffered by Obtilia Eugenio Manuel (who receives PBI accompaniment) and which were extended for the first time in September 2007.¹⁴ **The IACHR has asked Mexico to submit a report about the precautionary measures granted to the OPIM in 2005. Tlachinollan reports that the IACHR recognizes that there is a "persecution against the organization, and that there is imminent risk to the security and physical integrity of members of the organization."**¹⁵

1 *El Sur* and *La Jornada Guerrero*, April 1 and 2, 2008; *All Rights for All National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations*, Urgent Action, April 18, 2008

2 *El Sur*, April 20-27, 2008

3 *El Sur*, April 27, 2008

4 *Case File Number 48 – 2/2008. All Rights for All National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations*, Urgent Action: Arrest warrants against 15 leaders and members of the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa – 5 arrested, April 18, 2008.

5 *El Sur*, April 18, 2008.

6 *La Jornada Guerrero*, July 4, 2008

7 *La Jornada Guerrero*, July 4, 2008, *Tlachinollan Human Rights Center*, Bulletin, July 7, 2008

8 *El Sur*, April 19 and 20, 2008

9 *El Sur*, April 18, 2008

10 *La Jornada Guerrero*, June 3, 2008

11 *Washington Office on Latin America and Latin American Working Group*, Public Letter, June 10, 2008.

12 *Idem*; *Amnesty International*, Urgent Actions: Urgent Action 49/08, AMR 41/005/2008, February 22, 2008; AMR 41/011/2008, April 22, 2008

13 *Tlachinollan Human Rights Center*, July 7, 2008

14 *Washington Office on Latin America and Latin American Working Group*, Press release, June 23, 2008.

15 *Center for Justice and International Law*, July 9, 2008

16 *Tlachinollan Human Rights Center*, July 8, 2008.

Interview with Alejandra Gonzalez Marin, psychologist for the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

Alejandra González Marin is a psychologist who has worked for the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center for four years. She works closely with the legal department to provide psychological attention to victims of domestic violence and victims of socio-political violence, and provides counseling to organizations such as the OMESP and the OPIM who face legal persecution. Much of the population that she works with are indigenous and have little financial resources. On July 11, 2008 two PBI volunteers met with Alejandra and talked to her about her work with Tlachinollan.

Can you tell us a little bit about your work?

"I coordinate a program that provides psychological attention to victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, and victims of socio-political violence who have suffered from serious human rights violations. In the past I worked with environmentalist Felipe Arrega who was imprisoned for a fabricated crime, and I am currently working with the five members of the OPIM who are also imprisoned for a crime they did not commit. I also work with OPIM Secretary Obtilia Eugenio Manuel who faces constant threats and harassment.

The psychosocial work that I carry out is very complicated, since talking about justice in Guerrero is relative - those who suffer from human rights violations often do not attain justice for these crimes, and I have to counsel victims with this in mind."

What are the psychological effects of legal persecutions against human rights defenders?

"There are several different effects, some of which are different for the prisoners than for the rest of the organization. The five prisoners continually ask themselves: *Why? Why me? Why now?* One part of the work is helping them understand that they were imprisoned because they fought for their rights. It is an unfair situation for them, but once they understand why they were imprisoned, they will have more strength to face their imprisonment.

The underlying goal behind legal persecutions is to debilitate the organization. Even though the organization feels strong, organized, and with real capacities, they have to understand that they are not strong and that the State has a lot more power. As soon as the organization stops doing their human rights work, the State has achieved its goal. An organization faced with this situation often has to completely stop what they are doing and focus on freeing their prisoners. Both the educational and psychological departments in Tlachinollan work with organizations so that they can find ways to continue their human rights work, and not focus all of their efforts on just the detainees."

"Not only are the prisoners affected by their incarceration, but the prisoner's family is also



Interview with Alejandra González Marín from the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center

destroyed. Having a father or a husband in prison means that the person who provided the main source of income is no longer able to provide for the family. Women must become more active in the organization, even though they may not have participated before. At the same time, rumors are spread amongst the communities which make people scared to participate in the organization. These rumors spread a negative image of the OPIM, propagate the idea that people who participate in the organization are delinquents, and that fighting for your rights means you will go to jail. These rumors can successfully destroy the organization's ability to further develop their work."

"Legal persecutions also affect the leaders of the organization, such as Obtilia Eugenio, OPIM Secretary, who has been harassed, threatened, and constantly watched. I think that Obtilia's situation is a good example of violence towards women. Obtilia is a woman, an activist, and a human rights defender. The state focuses on her because of her five conditions: she is a woman, a mother, indigenous, poor, and an activist. Those that harass her think that Obtilia could stop her work at any time because she is concerned about her children, her family, or her husband. However,

they are wrong because the convictions of a woman like Obtilia are stronger than her exhaustion. Without a doubt the constant harassment has affected her and this is why I work with her."

And what are the long-term psychological effects?

"The long-term goal of legal persecutions is to destroy the organization. The prisoners will spend months in prison and when they are released they will find that many things have changed. They might find that their wives have been empowered, that the organization is stronger, or that the organization is weaker, or many other things. They might not know how to readjust with their families, in the organization, and they run the risk of remaining victimized instead of rising up to be the leaders that they are."

And do you see effects in society?

"Yes of course, PBI and Tlachinollan are also working in Ayutla! The government must use the media to justify their actions. They must influence the opinion of the population, and this is dangerous for organizations like ours in the region. The people often say, These people are the ones behind the delinquents from the OPIM."

Interview with Cándido Félix Santiago, indigenous leader of the “Regional Council for the Development of the Me’phaa People Who Speak the Bathaa Dialect”

The Regional Council for the Development of the Me’phaa People Who Speak the Bathaa Dialect is made up of 27 communities and more than 15,000 inhabitants from the municipalities of Metlatónoc, Altamajalcingo del Monte and Tlapa, in the Montaña region in Guerrero. In November 2006, they began to protest constant discrimination by the state government, and demand that the Guerrero Department of Education recognize their dialect in the official plans of study. They also want the state to follow through with their commitment to send teachers that speak the Bathaa dialect to schools in the region and carry out public works designated in the municipality. Cándido Félix, leader of the Council and native to Juanacatlán, Metlatónoc (one of the poorest municipalities in the country) tells us the reasons for this struggle and its consequences.

Tell us about the struggle that you and your people are fighting for.

Basically, my struggle, the struggle of the people is about facing our needs: that we do not have teachers, we do not have public works, we do not have doctors, and we lack the most basic need for us: education. A community without education is a community that lives in darkness, and can not be developed. So, for me, to fight for the people is to ensure that the government will solve our problems, and accept our youth, accept our mother tongue, Me’phaa Bathaa.

What has the response been from the authorities?

First off, they have not solved our problems. Instead, we have received arrest warrants. On the first occasion, they put me in jail on February 5, 2007, the second time was June 7 of the same year. The third time was September 28, the fourth was October 19, 2007. (...) My people have been harassed. The military comes at night to check our homes, they want to raid our homes.

¿How has this affected your life, your work, your people?

Quite a bit. In the first place, I do not have an income, I am a farmer, and if I do not work, I do not eat. My

family will be left without food, my children without clothes. This has affected me a lot (...) because besides being thrown in jail, now they are investigating me, and I have to sign-in every 15 days in Tlapa, in Tixtla, in Chilpancingo. My time is taken up by signing-in, and I only have two or three days left for my work, or my personal matters.

Every time that people go to Tlapa, they are questioned, they try to get information out of them (...), they cannot just be left alone and (...) many of them do not want to go to the city because of the simple fact that “why should I go, the police are there, the checkpoints are there, they ask me questions, they look for me on their lists to see if I am a delinquent...” People are afraid because the government is always fabricating crimes. They are afraid. They produce fear in the community. They do not allow the community to talk, they do not let the community turn in their petitions and requests to the government.

What do you think will happen now? Do you think that the situation will remain the same?

With the way this government looks, with Felipe Calderón and Zeferino Torreblanca, there is not much hope that the situation will get better.



Presentation by Cándido Félix during Tlachinollan’s XIV anniversary

There is no hope that in the next three years this man will change because he already showed us the way he will act. He showed himself to be a repressive governor, a governor that may be worse than what happened in previous decades. It could get worse, and there is little hope.

Interview with José Manuel Olivares, Director of the José María Morelos y Pavón Regional Human Rights Center in Chilapa de Álvarez.

In the Mexico Project Bulletin Number 23, we reported on the detention of José Manuel Olivares in November 2007, which occurred while documenting police abuses during a protest. In addition, fifteen members of the Chilapa Citizens Council were also detained. On July 4th we interviewed José Manuel about his current situation and the problems faced by human rights defenders who have legal cases against them.

José Manuel reports that since November, several legal investigations have been initiated against “people who, in some way, fight so that human rights can become a reality. The legal case surrounding my detention in November is full of irregularities on behalf of the prosecution. Not only that, but the police, the prosecution’s witnesses, and the municipal officials have failed to appear at the proceedings.”

The second legal case that José Manuel faces began in April

2008 when indigenous farmers from different communities began to protest high fertilizer prices.

“It was about two thirty when they called to tell us that there was a protest in front of the town hall. I went to see what was going on and this meant that just for being there, (...) they accused me of leading the protests. [This accusation] led to another investigation against me, and could lead to an additional punishment for a crime that I did not commit.”

Currently these two cases are under investigation in the local District Attorney General’s Office – this, in effect, has a negative impact on José Manuel’s work. “They have always kept us wondering what will happen with this investigation. The criminalization of social protest follows the new reforms and the new government’s interests, and the interests of the governing class who holds the economic power. The criminalization of social protest, sustained through criminal reforms on a federal level, and

through constitutional reforms, makes it easier to turn over natural resources and the nation’s sovereignty to foreign interests. These reforms and laws were created in order to minimize the power of the people and to diffuse social protest.”

José Manuel ends by affirming that “in all of Mexico and in particular in Guerrero, the situation, the safety of the members of the human rights groups is more vulnerable because we are in the middle of different social conflicts, sometimes as spokespeople, sometimes as human rights defenders and sometimes as witnesses of what happens (...). As the mobilizations of the indigenous and non-indigenous people continue, so continues the criminalization of social protest, so continues the military presence in the communities, using the war against drugs, and the trafficking of arms and explosives to justify that presence (...).”

Concern for Legal Cases against Human Rights Defenders

"Human rights-sensitive interpretations and application of constitutional principles and the law by the judiciary can be a decisive factor in securing [human rights defenders'] protection from harassment by the use and abuse of judicial procedures."

Hina Jilani, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General for Human Rights Defenders

The three PBI projects in Latin America have on several occasions reiterated their concerns regarding the increasing number of legal persecutions against human rights defenders. These cases of legal persecutions are becoming more common in Latin America, and not just in the countries where PBI works. In their Report on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders in the Americas, the Inter-American Commission on Human rights recognizes that human rights defenders are in many cases subject to "criminal proceedings [that] are instituted without any evidence, for the purpose of harassing the members of the organizations, who must assume the psychological and economic burden of facing a criminal indictment." These procedures, while within the legal framework, often end up restricting the activities of the defenders, who can no longer work to defend human rights, but must instead focus on their own defense. In addition, these legal procedures often raise concerns about the legitimacy of the defender's legal human rights work.

In Guerrero, human rights defenders have faced legal criminal cases for many years: one of the

most emblematic cases was that of Felipe Arreaga, advisor to the Organization of Women Environmentalists of the Sierra de Petatlán, who was declared prisoner of conscience by Amnesty International in 2005. Felipe was arrested, accused of homicide, and following 10 months in prison was freed and declared innocent. While in Felipe's case, and in many other cases, the final ruling absolves the person of the crime, a defender who spends 10 months or more in jail endures a grueling psychological process, cannot continue their human rights work, and when freed must readjust back into their work.

More recently there has been an increase in the number of legal cases against human rights defenders in Guerrero. While the case of the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa People is one of the best-known current cases (see page 3), several social leaders and human rights defenders have faced legal cases against them during the last year. In this bulletin we also portrayed other cases of human rights defenders who face criminal cases. José Manuel Olivares from the José María Morelos y Pavón Regional Human Rights Center has two cases against him, Cándido Félix

Santiago, leader of the Regional Council for the Development of the Me'phaa People who Speak the Bathaa Dialect, is under investigation and has been arrested four times, and there are an additional eleven arrest warrants against other members of the same organization. Other social organizations also face arrest warrants: the Regional Coordination of Community Authorities (Community Police) in San Luis Acatlán have 30 and Radio Ñomndaa have 11. The Tlachinollan Human Rights Center has recently documented 201 criminal cases against social organizations in the state.¹

PBI Mexico is increasingly concerned about harassment to human rights defenders by means of legal cases against them, actions that negatively affect both their safety and fundamental rights, and hinder their human rights work.

¹ *El Sur*, June 22, 2008.

Bordertown – New Threats to "Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa"

Bordertown, a movie inspired by the many women who have been assassinated in Ciudad Juárez and in Chihuahua, provoked a new wave of threats directed toward the leaders of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa. Since 2001, this organization (Our Daughters Coming Home in English) has fought for justice in the cases of hundreds of murders and kidnappings of women in these towns, in a context of elevated violence and impunity.¹ In order to gain international support and increase visibility within Mexico, the organization has supported the making of the movie *Bordertown*.

Following the release of the film in Mexico on May 16, 2008, members of the organization including its leader Marisela Ortiz Rivera received threats on their cellular phones. These threats stated that the women are in danger of being followed and incarcerated.² On May 25, the organization received another threat, this time by

e-mail, stating that the activists should leave the city and warned them that they would be sexually attacked, assassinated, and that their daughters would be returned to them in pieces if they continue with their work.³ Following these threats, Amnesty International released an Urgent Action in which they demanded that authorities take adequate measures to protect the organization, conduct an immediate investigation into the threats, and that the government comply with international obligations including the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders.⁴

In addition, Lothar Mark, member of the German Parliament and President of the Mexican-German Friendship Group, expressed concern for the organization's security, and sent a letter to Marisela Ortiz Riviera, stating that he is deeply concerned that the members of Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa have been exposed to defamation

and threats that have been used to "debilitate their important work through intimidation, blocking their efforts to obtain justice for the victims."⁵ Mark expressed his solidarity and support to Marisela Ortiz and asked that she "keep [me] informed about [her] work and safety, so that I can be useful in whatever way possible."⁶ He also told the activists to maintain the "bravery and strength necessary to continue their work."⁷

¹ www.mujeresdejuarez.org

² *Amnesty International, Urgent Action AU 167/07, May 28, 2008.*

³ *La Jornada, June 2, 2008.*

⁴ *Amnesty International, Urgent Action AU 167/07, May 28, 2008.*

⁵ www.lothar-mark.de

⁶ *La Jornada, June 15, 2008.*

⁷ *Idem*

The Team's Work in Mexico

Accompaniments:

- Emiliana, Francisco and Alejandro Cerezo Contreras, members of the Cerezo Committee throughout the Federal District and on their trips to visit their imprisoned brothers.
- Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, Andrea Eugenio Manuel and Cuauhtémoc Ramírez Rodríguez, leaders of the Organization of the Indigenous Me'Phaa People (OPIM), in the municipality of Ayutla de los Libres, Guerrero and in their activities throughout Guerrero.
- Tlachinollan Human Rights Center: Ayutla office staff.
- Tita Radilla Martínez, vice-president of the Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Abuses in Mexico (AFADEM), in the municipality of Atoyac de Álvarez, Guerrero and in her activities throughout Guerrero.
- Celsa Valdovinos Ríos and Felipe Arreaga, leaders of the Organization of Women Environmentalists of the Sierra de Petatlán(OMESP), in the municipality of Petatlán and in their activities throughout the state of Guerrero.

Public Relations:

Meetings with Mexican Authorities:

Federal Level.

National Attorney General's Office (PGR):

Juan de Dios Castro, Deputy Attorney General for Human Rights; Pascual Moreno Méndez, General Director for Recommendations and Friendly Settlements in Human Rights; Jorge Alfredo Ramírez Talamantes, General Director for the Promotion of Human Rights and Attention to Complaints; Gustavo Ortega Vázquez, General Director for Attending to Victims; Luis Gabriel Vázquez, Assistant Director; Noé Ramírez Mandujano, Deputy Attorney General for Organized Crime; Jorge Alberto Alvarez Mendoza, Director of the State Delegation of the PGR in Guerrero;

Department of Public Security: Víctor Hugo Pérez Hernández, General Director for Human Rights; José Guillermo Petricoli, Assistant Director for Human Rights; María Elena Tolento Yañez, Director of Human Rights Protection; María Granados Trespacios, Multilateral Affairs; **Institute of Immigration:** Israel Estrada, Assistant Director; **Congress:** Odilón Romero Guitiérrez, Federal Representative for Guerrero; **National Human Rights Commission:** Enrique Pimentel González Pacheco, Director of Contact with NGOs, Technical Secretary of the Consulting Council;

State of Guerrero.

State Attorney General's Office: Eduardo Murueta Urrutia, State Attorney General; **Department of the Interior:** Nelson Bello Solís, Under Secretary for Legal Affairs and Human Rights; Victor Hugo Méndez Salgado, Director for Control and Evaluation of Human Rights; Jesus Sales Moreno, General Director of Defense Services; **State Congress:** Rossana

Mora Patiño, President of the Commission on Human Rights, Ignacio Luna Gerónimo, Representative for District XIV Ayutla; **State Ministerial Police:** Erit Montúfar Méndez, General Director of the State Ministerial Police;

Municipalities.

Ayutla de los Libres: Cristóbal Miranda García, Commander of the Ministerial Police, Atoyac de Álvarez: Gustavo Carrillo, Municipal President; Olegario Peláez Valdés, Commander of the Ministerial Police; Ometepec: Eduardo Montañón Salinas, Municipal President; Efrén Suastegui Mayo, Director of the Public Ministry; Bibiano Coronado, Municipal Official.

Meetings with embassies and international entities:

Meetings with representatives of the following embassies: Australia, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, United Kingdom, United States.

International Delegations: European Commission Delegation; Amerigo Inclaterra, Ex-Representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Liliana Valiña, Representative a.i. Of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Meetings with non-governmental organizations, academics, and the church:

International: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation; International Committee of the Red Cross; International Service for Peace; World Organization Against Torture; Center for International Policy, Americas Program;

Mexico City: Mexican Commission for the Defense and Promotion of Human Rights, Miguel Agustín Pro Juárez Human Rights Center; Assembly of Indigenous Migrants (AMI); Fray Francisco de Vitoria Human Rights Center; Service and Assessment for Peace (SERAPAZ); "All Rights for All" National Human Rights Network; Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Project (PRODESC); Cerezo Committee;

Guerrero: Radio Ñomndaa, Tlachinollan Human Rights Center; Regional Council for the Development of the Me phaa People who speak the Bátháá Dialect, Guerrero Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations; José María Morelos y Pavón Regional Human Rights Center; Chilapa Citizens Council; Monseñor Alejo Zavala, Bishop for Chilpancingo and Chilapa; Víctor Manuel Aguilar, General Vicar for the Parish; Eduardo Navas Muñoz, Coordinator for the Pastoral Penitenciaria; Right to Know Campaign, University of California Santa Cruz.

Forums:

Guerrero: "Guerrero: a place where poverty is punished and protest is against the law" organized by the Tlachinollan Human Rights Center.

PBI Mexico Presents its Report: Human Rights Defenders in the State of Guerrero.

On May 29, 2008, the Peace Brigades International Mexico Project presented *Human Rights Defenders in the State of Guerrero. Cases of resistance and initiatives from Mexican civil society regarding the promotion and defense of fundamental rights in Mexico.* The event took place in the Club de Periodistas in Mexico City.

Following a welcome by PBI Mexico Coordinator Sergi Bach, the first part of the event began with a speech by Ms. Liliana Valiña, ad-interim representative in Mexico of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. Minister Alejandro Negrín, Director of Human Rights for the Department of Foreign Affairs, Juan Alarcón Hernández, President of the State Commission for the Defense of Human Rights in Guerrero and July García Silverio, representing the Department of Public Security in the State of Guerrero, also spoke during the event.

The second part of the event began with a presentation about PBI's work in Mexico since the middle of the 1990's including a spotlight on the problems that human rights defenders currently face in Guerrero. Afterwards, organizations that receive PBI accompaniment spoke including: Abel Barrera Hernández, Director of the "Tlachinollan" Human Rights Center; Tita Radilla Martínez, Vice-president of the Association of Relatives of the Detained, Disappeared and Victims of Human Rights Violations in Mexico (AFADDEM); Celsa Valdovinos Ríos, President of the Organization of Women Environmentalists of the Sierra de Petatlán; and Obtilia Eugenio Manuel, Secretary of the Organization of Indigenous Me'phaa People.

The event was attended by several human rights organizations from Guerrero and from Mexico City, as well as by representatives from embassies, international delegations, and Mexican authorities.

This publication is based on PBI Mexico's eight years of experience working in Guerrero.



PBI presents its report: Human Rights Defenders in the State of Guerrero, Mexico City, May 29, 2008

Peace Brigades International

PBI is a non-governmental organization that, upon request, maintains international accompaniment teams in conflict areas. The organization's objective is the protection of the political space for individuals and organizations that promote human rights and which, in turn, are under threat of persecution and repression as a consequence of their work. International accompaniment is in this way a conflict transformation tool, through which third parties can contribute in creating the conditions necessary to resolve a conflict peacefully. At no time does PBI attempt to replace Mexican initiatives that promote the respect for human rights, but rather limits itself to supporting such initiatives with the presence of international accompaniment volunteers. To achieve this goal, PBI teams work in-country accompanying those people or organizations under threat, making periodic visits to conflict zones, distributing information on the conflict's development and maintaining dialogue with civil and military authorities in an effort to raise international awareness.

The PBI Mexico Project Information

Bulletin is a quarterly publication produced by the team in Mexico. PBI maintains the highest level of objectivity possible thanks to the use of a wide variety of public sources (newspapers, magazines, public reports from civil organizations, etc.), and the citation of all sources used in its articles. The newsletter is distributed both within Mexico and internationally. If you would like to receive the PBI Mexico Project's Information Bulletin, please contact the Project Office in San Francisco or the PBI Team in Mexico.

PBI Mexico Team in July and August 2008:

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