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## PBI MEXICO – March 2014

## New accompaniment in Coahuila

### Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights

*The Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights does intense work on behalf of human rights in the Northern state of Coahuila. In February 2014, PBI signed an accompaniment agreement with the Center to support their human rights defense work in the state.*

The Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights (FJdL) in Saltillo, Coahuila, was created in 2002 by Bishop Raúl Vera. Initially, the organization focused on problems related to workers' rights and community rights. Since then the Center has diversified its work to also include disappearances, migration, and training for the construction of social alliances to promote and protect human rights.

In Coahuila, the FJdL has been a point of reference in the defense of human rights. The organization takes the problems that affect the state and the victims' requests to the national and international levels. The Center is part of the National Network of Civil Human Rights Organizations "All Rights for All" (*Red TdT*) and actively participates in the Autonomous Working Group on Disappearances in Coahuila.

The organization also provides human rights education and shares information with the local society about the importance of promoting a culture of respect for human rights. Bishop Raúl Vera has been an active voice in the defense of victims of violations in Coahuila and in Mexico, and together with other members of the Center, has demanded peace and social justice in the country.

#### FUUNDEC

There were more than 26,000 disappeared or missing people in Mexico between 2006 and 2012.<sup>1</sup> In order to provide visibility to this humanitarian emergency and to push authorities to search for their disappeared relatives, a group of families from Coahuila created [United Forces for Our Disappeared in Coahuila](#) (FUUNDEC) in December 2009.



*A PBI volunteer observes a FUUNDEC protest in Saltillo, Coahuila*

The FJdL provides legal advice and organizing assistance for more than 380 cases of disappearances that have been reported by FUUNDEC. On a political level, they continue to demand justice and maintain dialogue with authorities to demand an immediate search for the disappeared, the creation and implementation of adequate protocols for investigation of these cases, and the implementation of a federal program to attend to families of the disappeared. They also want the Mexican state to accept the recommendations in the preliminary report by the United Nations Working Group on Forced Disappearances.

The main demand of the organization and the families is an immediate search for all of the disappeared people. This task demands the creation and application of specific protocols and the elaboration of a national database with genetic information of all the disappeared people and their

<sup>1</sup> Amnesty International: Confronting a nightmare: Disappearances in Mexico, 2013. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1iB7ZuL>

relatives. According to the Center, the level of attention that the authorities give to the matter is important. This is why the FJdL aims to actively dialogue with the Mexican State, even though many times they have had little to no response from authorities.<sup>2</sup>



*Meeting between FUUNDEC families and the FJdL Center*

### **Accomplishments and challenges**

The intense advocacy work by the Center has allowed the families from FUUNDEC to begin to dialogue with state and federal authorities so that they will comply with their demands. In addition, the movement has started to include relatives of the disappeared from other states in the country, and FUUNDEC has become a key actor on a national and international levels with the name FUUNDEC-M (M for Mexico).

<sup>2</sup> For more information about disappearances in Mexico and the difficulties that families face, see the articles: <http://bit.ly/1euxZpn>, <http://bit.ly/Qam8qG> and <http://bit.ly/1mvulOm>

Despite these accomplishments, as of March 2014, the governmental searches have not yet resolved any of the cases and the families continue to wait for a response from authorities about the search for their relatives and the identification of the perpetrators.

In addition to the work on disappearances, the FJdL Center also works to promote a respect for the dignity and human rights of the migrants that cross Mexico en route to the United States. In collaboration with the Saltillo Migrant House and other organizations, the FJdL Center has helped to put the issue at the forefront both inside and outside Mexico.

### **PBI accompaniment**

PBI supports the FJdL through visits to Coahuila and through the organization of international speaking tours, such as Alma Garcia's tour to Europe in September 2013. PBI also distributes information about the Center's work and maintains dialogue with authorities about the importance of protecting the organization and recognizing their work.

The Diocesan Center works in close collaboration with the [Saltillo Migrant House](#) and the [Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center](#), two organizations in Coahuila that also receive PBI accompaniment.

With this accompaniment, PBI aims to support the FJdL in their work to protect human rights while also supporting the relatives of the disappeared in their tireless search for justice. PBI will continue to maintain dialogue with authorities in Coahuila so that they recognize the importance of the Center's work.

### **For more information about the Fray Juan de Larios Center and the context in Coahuila:**

- the Saltillo Diocese's [website](#)
- FUUNDEC's [website](#)
- the third chapter of [A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights in Mexico](#) published by PBI Mexico