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New accompaniment in Coahuila

Saltillo Migrant House

PBI accepted a petition to accompany the Saltillo Migrant House due to their high level risk, evidenced by recurring security incidents targeted at both the migrant community that receives support from the organization and the workers at the shelter.

The Saltillo Migrant House has been working to defend the human rights of migrants since 2002. The shelter has received widespread recognition for their work, such as the [Lettelier-Moffitt award](#) from the Institute for Policy Studies.

“The invisible travels”

“Every year, hundreds of thousands of undocumented Central American migrants, primarily from Guatemala, Honduras and El Salvador, travel through Mexico on their way to the US border.”¹ The shelter was created in Saltillo during a time when there was a wave of homicides of Central American migrants.

In 2011, the National Human Rights Commission (CNDH) [documented 214 kidnappings](#), which affected a total of 11,333 migrants.

“Despite government commitments to improve migrants’ security, those who commit these crimes are almost never brought to justice.”² According to a report, “Mexico is going through (...) a crisis of alarming proportion in terms of attacks, assassinations, and exploitation of migrants and their families.”³

During a visit to the shelter, a migrant told the PBI team: “The United States is the dream but unfortunately Mexico is a nightmare.”

The shelter's work

The shelter receives and supports an average of 80 migrants a day. The organization is well-known amongst the migrant shelters in Mexico since, in addition to providing humanitarian support to migrants, they also document and report on the human rights violations of migrants. This is illustrated in their book, [Cuaderno sobre secuestro de migrantes \[Book on the kidnapping of migrants\]](#) and their report [Saltillo, Coahuila. México: un lugar de tortura a personas migrantes \[Saltillo, Coahuila. Mexico: a place of torture for migrants\]](#).

The humanitarian support provided by the Saltillo Migrant House includes medical and psychological attention for those who need it, as well as legal advice regarding migratory procedures and deportation.



A PBI volunteer accompanies a member of the Saltillo Migrant House

¹ Latin America Working Group, *Perilous Journey: Kidnapping and Violence Against Migrants in Transit Through Mexico*, October 2013. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1doXkWp>

² Amnesty International, *Migrants in Mexico: Invisible Journeys*, October 2013. Available at: <http://bit.ly/PVjpBv>

³ Red TDT, *Informe sobre la situación general de los derechos de los migrantes y sus familias [Report on the general situation of the human rights of migrants and their families]*, July 2011. Available in Spanish at: <http://bit.ly/1j12Xdr>

The risk

In addition to the challenges that they face for their human rights work, several of the people who work with the migrant shelter are also victims of repeated security incidents and therefore have a high level of risk.

“The work is carried out in a context of corruption by authorities, an increase in crimes against migrants by organized crime groups, the complicity of authorities with these groups, and an intolerance by the population where the migrants cross; in addition, the community rejects them due to their Central American origin or because they believe they have ties to gangs and criminals.”⁴

In addition, the Shelter continues to be a victim of defamation by the press and authorities and there have been many episodes of harassment and threats against them. One example took place in January 2013 when Father Pedro Pantoja received a [death threat](#).

On January 27, 2014, another defender from the shelter was threatened because he was protecting a migrant. All of this took place at the main door of the shelter, an area that should have a permanent patrol by the State Police as part of their precautionary measures.

Protection measures

In 2009, the CNDH asked the Mexican State to implement precautionary measures for the organization and the Council to Prevent Discrimination granted these measures. This case was closed in 2013 due to the unsuccessful implementation of the measures.

In 2010 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) granted Precautionary Measures MC 312-09 to the organization.

In 2012, the Migrant House filed a request to participate in the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists, but this request was initially denied by the federal government under the allegation that the protection mechanism was not compatible with the other protection

⁴ Project Counselling Service (PCS) CAMEX, Situación general de defensoras y defensores de derechos humanos de migrantes en México [General Situation for migrant rights defenders in Mexico], Decembe 2012. Available at: <http://bit.ly/1hWRN6X>

measures that were already granted.

In addition in 2013, the Human Rights Commission for the State of Coahuila had requested the implementation of Precautionary Measures.

The human rights defenders from the organization report that even though the measures were accepted by the federal, state and municipal government, the implementation of these protection measures was not carried out in coordination with the beneficiary organization, and as a result there are still many difficulties in the implementation.

International support

In addition to PBI, the shelter receives support from several international organizations. For example, in February 2014 the organization was visited by the General Secretary of Amnesty International, and the two organizations are currently working on a joint campaign.

In 2012, the shelter was invited by the IACHR to participate in a [Thematic Hearing on Migration](#) which took place in Washington, DC.

In 2013 the director of the shelter, Alberto Xicoténcatl, went on a [speaking tour to the US with PBI](#) in which he spoke with Congressional representatives, local civil society, the State Department and the American Bar Association.

With its accompaniment, PBI aims to open political space for the organization to act at the local, national and international levels, so that it can carry out its human rights defense work with safety, recognition, legitimacy and sustainability.

PBI will continue to dialogue with local authorities so that they provide the recognition and protection that the Saltillo Migrant House needs in order to carry out its work.

The shelter closely works with the [Fray Juan de Larios Diocesan Center for Human Rights](#) and the [Juan Gerardi Human Rights Center](#), two organizations in Coahuila that also receive PBI accompaniment.

For more information about the Saltillo Migrant Shelter and the context in Coahuila:

- their [Facebook](#) page
- follow the Migrant Shelter on [Twitter](#)
- the second chapter of [A Panorama of the Defense of Human Rights in Mexico](#) published by PBI Mexico