



## Monthly Information Pack Guatemala

Number 157 - October 2016

### 1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

*Monthly selection of news on the situation in Guatemala as highlighted by the press, related to the main thematic areas of PBI Guatemala's work: the fight against impunity, land issues and the negative effects of globalization on human rights.*

#### **#NiUnaMenos #NotOneLess: the march against violence against women**

The testimony of one of the participants in the demonstration on October 19 in the Central Park of Guatemala City sums up the reason for this mobilization: *I am here because of the disproportionate level of violence with which we are murdered in Guatemala and across the world.*<sup>1</sup> 'Not one less' is the slogan under which thousands of women took to the streets in various cities in Latin America to protest against violence against women.<sup>2</sup> The trigger of this protest was the violent death of an Argentinean adolescent, Lucia Perez, who was brutally raped and murdered a week before. In the social networks, to the cry of #NiUnaMenos, the call was launched for a national strike of women. The response in cities across the continent was impressive; thousands of people attended the marches and demonstrations. In Guatemala City the protest was attended by women's rights organizations and amongst the protest slogans were also protests against child pregnancies.<sup>3</sup>

As one of the participants pointed out, when it comes to violence against women, *reality surpasses fiction*. The rates of violence against women in Guatemala reach unimaginable levels. The United Nations recalls that there are an average of two femicides per day in the country.<sup>4</sup> In this context, Guatemalan singer Rebeca Lane wrote a song to accompany the struggle of women who took to the streets to claim their rights and denounce the terrible levels of violence against them. The lyrics of this song outline that *every hour at least 20 women are raped, that is only one day in Guatemala, multiply it and you will know why we are angry.*<sup>5</sup> Human Rights Watch, one of the world's most well-known international human rights organizations, says violence against women is a chronic problem in Guatemala, and those responsible rarely face trial.<sup>6</sup> The demonstration of last October 19 has contributed to raising the profile of a terrifying situation, where the facts speak for themselves.

The demands of the protest not only fall within the Guatemalan reality, but have reached a global character, since violence against women is something that affects all the countries and regions of the world. Marta Dillon, an Argentinean journalist and activist, affirms that *femicides are the result of a series of economic and social violence, pedagogies of cruelty, a culture of "there must have been a reason", or "she must have done something" that allows, justifies and endorses it. It is not a security or insecurity problem. Fighting such violence requires a multiple response. It involves us all, but we know that the powers of the state and all its organs (national, provincial, municipal) are only made under social pressure, coming from below.*<sup>7</sup>

The occupation of the Central Park of Guatemala City by hundreds of people occurred in a country that has experienced an internal armed conflict plagued by torture and sexual slavery, deaths and disappearances of thousands of women, and where the persistence of violence continues to threaten the daily lives of women. The slogans #VivasNosQueremos and #NiUnaMenos paid tribute to all victims of gender violence, past and present. Among the many women named, were the victims of Sepur Zarco, an emblematic case of the internal armed conflict that, after a long journey in search of justice for the survivors, concluded in February of this year. The historical sentence recognized sexual violence

1 Video #NiUnaMenos posted on the 31 of October 2016 on the facebook page of Plaza Publica GT.

2 BBC Mundo, "#NiUnaMenos: Thousands of Women Take to the Streets of Latin America to Demand an End to Gender Violence," October 19, 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina -37711297>

3 Ibid.

4 Web page "UN Women", accessed October 31, 2016, <http://www.endvawnow.org/en/articles/299-basic-data-.html>

5 Video posted on October 31, 2016 on the Facebook page of singer Rebeca Lane.

6 Human Rights Watch website, accessed October 31, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2014/country-chapters/guatemala>

7 Dillon, M., Community Press Km 169 "#NiUnaMenos. We Stopped. ", <Http://www.prensacomunitaria.org/news/new-param/>

committed against indigenous women in the context of the internal armed conflict as a crime against humanity.<sup>8</sup>

The protests of October 19, denouncing structural violence against women, draws awareness to the magnitude of a problem that can not be hidden and which requires extensive measures in all spheres of life.

## 2. ACCOMPANIMENT

*PBI accompanies social organizations and individuals who have received threats for their work in the defence and promotion of human rights. In this context we are accompanying social processes in the fight against impunity, land inequality and the negative impacts of globalisation on human rights.<sup>9</sup>*

### PROBLEM OF ACCESS TO LAND

This month we continued to accompany the **Union of Campesino Organisations of Verapaz (UVOC)**. We visited the office of UVOC lawyer, Jorge Luis Morales, in the capital city and we maintained contact with other members of the organization and the communities that are part of it.

### FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

We continue with our accompaniment to the **Human Rights Law Firm**. We accompanied lawyer Edgar Pérez Archila on his travels and were present at his office twice a week.

On October 18, we accompanied the lawyers to a hearing in the *Dos Erres* case, in which the defense filed an application to cease criminal prosecution of the defendant, Efraín Ríos Montt, alleging his precarious state of health.

On October 9, we accompanied the members of the **Neighbourhood Association of Chicoyogüito** to their assembly in the municipality of Cobán, Alta Verapaz.

### NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF GLOBALIZATION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

As part of our accompaniment to the **Ecumenical Coordinator in Defense of Life in Zacapa and Chiquimula**, we maintained contact with the **Rev. José Pilar Álvarez** to update us on his security situation after the revocation of his precautionary measures. Also, on October 26, we accompanied the Coordinator in their visit to the Congress of the Republic of Guatemala, where they went to present their proposal of environmental policy framework for Zacapa and Chiquimula, which seeks to declare the Mountain of the Granadillas as a Protected Area.

With respect to the **Council of Cunén Communities (CCC)**, in October we followed their situation closely through regular contact with some of its members.

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<sup>8</sup> United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Guatemala: UN Experts Greet Sentence of Two Former Military Officials for Crimes Against Humanity," March 1, 2016, <http://www.oacnudh.org.gt/documentos/index.html>

<sup>9</sup> You can consult general information about the accompaniment to the organizations and people that we accompany, in our web site: <http://www.pbi-guatemala.org/field-projects/pbi-guatemala/who-we-accompany/>



We visited the **Peaceful Resistance of La Puya** protest camp and continued to monitor the protest camp in front of the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM). It remains unclear whether the mine will be closed for good.

We were also present at the protest camp of the **Peaceful Resistance of La Laguna** and have maintained regular contact with its members.

We follow closely the situation of the members of the **Council of K'iche' Peoples**. During this month there have been no changes in the delicate security situation of the leader **Aura Lolita Chávez**.

Between October 24 and 27, we accompanied the members of the **Campesino Coordinator New Day' Chortí (CCCND)**, both at its headquarters (in Camotán) and in the communities of Matasano and El Ingenio, where we provided accompaniment during an event involving four Colombian academics where members of CCCND talked about the situation of the communities 20 years after the signing of the Peace Agreements.



### 3. POLITICAL ACCOMPANIMENT

#### Meetings and other contact with the diplomatic bodies, international organisations and Guatemalan authorities.

*Meetings with national and international authorities are an important way for PBI to make known what we do and what our objectives are. Through these meetings, where necessary and in a reserved manner, we share our concerns about worrying situations that we have witnessed first-hand from the work we do in the field.*

This month we held meetings with:

- Rita Grajeda, Head of Human Rights at the **Embassy of the United Kingdom**.
- Mario Minera, Mediation Officer of the **National Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH)**.
- Stefano Gatto, Ambassador, Jennifer Echeverria, Human Rights Officer, Tomás Pallas, Cooperation Officer and Bastian Engelhard, Political Adviser to the **Embassy of the European Union Delegation**.
- Ana María Upegui, Interim Director, Catalina Lleras, Maia Campbell and Mary Briz, **Human Rights Officers of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**.
- Harald Klein, Ambassador, and Artur Brunner, Second Ambassador and Human Rights Officer, **Embassy of Germany**.
- Ronaldo Arango, President of the **Congressional Human Rights Commission**.
- Clara Molin, Second Secretary of the **Swedish Embassy**.
- Luis Fernando Molina, **Governor of the Department of Chiquimula**.

## Meetings with civil society

*The field team meets regularly with civil society in order to monitor the situation of human rights defenders human rights, inform each other about the work being done and to gather information to help analyse the internal situation. We maintain opportunities for co-ordination in the field of international accompaniment.*

This month we had meetings with: the **Protection Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders in Guatemala (UDEFEUGUA)**, the **Madre Selva Collective** and the **International Accompaniment Coordination in Guatemala (ACOGUATE)**.

## 4. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA OUTSIDE OF GUATEMALA

*Outside the country we constantly develop and strengthen the network of support for the Guatemalan PBI project, as this is one of the essential tools necessary to protect defenders of human rights. Regional Representatives, the Project Office Coordinator and other members of the committee and the Project Office and national groups of PBI, conduct public relations campaigns with many NGOs, agencies and national governments, parliamentarians and others. In this context we develop actions and public relations campaigns, and / or advocacy aimed at protecting defenders of human rights.*

We held a meeting in Brussels with Sylvain Schulze, Desk Officer for Guatemala of the **European External Action Service**.

## 5. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA IN GUATEMALA



On 5 October we held the forum: **20 Years of the Peace Accords. The Situation of Human Rights Defenders**. The forum featured several prominent members of Guatemalan civil society who talked about the situation of human rights defenders 20 years after the signing of the Peace Accords.

On 25 October we observed a hearing in the **Molina Theissen case**, in which the judge of the High Risk Court C resolved to press charges against the 5 accused military personnel for the crime of rape with aggravated punishment and crimes against the duties of humanity, committed against Emma Guadalupe Molina Theissen, and the enforced disappearance of her brother, a minor, Marco Antonio Molina Theissen in 1981. Among the accused soldiers are Benedicto Lucas García, Francisco Luis Gordillo, Manuel Antonio Callejas and Callejas, Edilberto Letona and Hugo Ramiro Saldaña Rojas.

## 6. NON- GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

*In this section we publish statements (some abbreviated) from human rights organisations in which they express their concerns regarding recent events.*

PAYXAIL YAJAW KONOB' Akateko, Chuj, Popti', Q'anjob'al  
Autoridades Ancestrales de las Naciones Originarias Akateko, Chuj, Popti', Q'anjob'al y Población Mestiza

### **A LA COMUNIDAD NACIONAL E INTERNACIONAL PAYXAIL YAJAW KONOB' AKATEKO, CHUJ, Q'ANJOB'AL, POPTI' COMUNICA**

1. En el marco de la permanente agresión en contra de nuestras naciones originarias, las órdenes de captura y arrestos injustos en contra de nuestras autoridades comunitarias, defensores de los derechos humanos y del territorio, siguen vigentes.
2. El día miércoles 26 de octubre, bajo la energía del día sagrado 5 Ab'ak/Kan, fue capturado el señor Domingo Francisco Cristóbal, un reconocido defensor de los derechos humanos individuales y colectivos, después de haber participado en una manifestación pacífica del Comité de Desarrollo Campesino (CODECA) en la ciudad de Huehuetenango. Mientras se disponía a regresar a su pueblo natal y tras haber pasado a almorzar en un comedor en la Villa de Chiantla del mismo departamento, fue detenido por miembros de la División Especial de Investigación Criminal (DEIC).
3. El señor Domingo Francisco Cristóbal es uno de los coordinadores de Payxa Yajawil Jolom Konob'/Autoridades Ancestrales Jolom Konob' junto a Domingo Baltazar expreso político por la misma causa, a la vez presidente del Consejo Asesor Indígena y de la Asociación Pro-justicia. Ha sido copromotor y cofundador de numerosos beneficios dirigidos al pueblo de Jolom Konob', a la Nación Maya Q'anjob'al y al pueblo Maya en general.

#### EXIGIMOS

1. Al Estado de Guatemala, la liberación inmediata del señor Domingo Francisco Cristóbal y la cancelación definitiva de todas las órdenes de captura habidas y por haber en contra de defensores de los derechos humanos, autoridades ancestrales, autoridades comunitarias y personas inocentes criminalizadas por sus labores humanistas.
2. Al Estado de Guatemala, la cancelación inmediata y definitiva de las licencias de megaproyectos entre Minería, Hidroeléctricas y en específico los proyectos: Hidro Santa Cruz en Santa Cruz Barillas, Promoción de Desarrollo Hídrico en San Mateo Ixtatán e Hidroeléctrica San Luís en Santa Eulalia, todos en el territorio Q'anjob'al del departamento de Huehuetenango; porque lejos de propiciar desarrollo han sido las causantes de la conflictividad y las numerosas violaciones de los derechos humanos en el mismo territorio, entre estas, las encarcelaciones injustas y las órdenes de captura.

“NO SOMOS CRIMINALES, SOMOS DEFENSORES DE LOS DERECHOS HUMANOS”

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Territorio Q'anjob'al 28 de octubre de 2016

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*All photos by PBI Guatemala*

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