



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 204 - September 2020

1. THE CURRENT SITUATION

Monthly update 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 defense of territory.

Attack against journalist and social communicators worsen

This month we regret to inform that there have been several acts of violence against an already heavily targeted collective of journalists.

On September 22, Ana Lucía Ixchú Hernández, Andrea Isabel Ixchú Hernández, Gabriela Ixchú Hernández and Carlos Ernesto Cano Ispaché, social communicators and members of the Solidarity Festival collective, were subject to threats and a knife attack by a group of unidentified individuals in the community forest of *Alto de Tonicapán*, in the west of the country. The journalists were carrying out audiovisual recording and documentation for the production of a documentary when the attack occurred. While filming they spotted a group of people illegally cutting down trees, and they duly alerted the National Council for Protected Areas (CONAP), who proceeded to arrest those three individuals. The CONAP personnel were attacked when they tried to return to the city, by a group of people who threatened them with sharp tools so that they would free the three detainees. Ms. Ixchú Hernández and Mr. Cano Ispaché tried to film these actions, for which they also became the target of threats and physical attacks. Finally, the three illegal loggers were released by force. The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (OBS) and the Unit for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders of Guatemala (UDEFEQUA), have indicated that these attacks occurred within the generalized and worsening context of systematic attacks against journalists, social communicators and defenders of the territory and indigenous rights in Guatemala.¹

The same day, September 22, the journalist Anastasia Mejía Tiriquiz, director of Xol Abaj Radio and Xol Abaj TV, along with Ms. Petrona Siy Castro, were detained by the Specialized Criminal Investigation Division (DEIC) in the municipality of Joyabaj (Quiché). The journalist was charged with the crimes of sedition, aggravated assault, arson and robbery. These accusations could represent a retaliation for her journalistic coverage of the incidents that occurred in the municipality of Joyabaj on August 24, when the population held a demonstration against the Mayor of the municipality. This coverage was broadcast live across the media outlets where she works. The National Civil Police (PNC) informed the family that the journalist would be transferred to the Cantel prison in Quetzaltenango. According to the Community Press, "Anastasia's journalism is committed to uncovering corruption in a municipality where Mayor Carrascosa has been reelected several times. The director of Radio Sonora published the arrest of the journalist on his Twitter account @ArnulfoAgustinG, alias "ElHombreNoticia", accusing her of directing a pirate radio."² Furthermore, the official Radio Sonora account reproduced the accusation as well as a hate message against the journalist. To date, the two human rights defenders remain in prison. Their first hearing is scheduled for October 8, 16 days following their arrest, despite the fact that the law establishes a 24-hour limit on detentions without an audience with a judge.

¹ OBS y UDEFEGUA, [Guatemala: Pronunciamiento conjunto: Nuevas agresiones contra quienes defienden el territorio](#), Ginebra-París-Ciudad de Guatemala, 25.09.2020.

² Rivera, N. y Ventura, J., [Detienen a periodista Anastasia Mejía en Joyabaj, Quiché](#), Prensa Comunitaria / Ruda, 23.09.2020.

On September 11, the journalist Sonny Figueroa, following an assault in the Central Park in Guatemala City, went to ask for help from the Secretariat for Social Communication, located in the Presidential Palace. According to his testimony, however, the security personnel from the National Palace did not allow him to enter. At that moment, a person dressed as a civilian approached him and began to insult and beat him. He asked the police, among whom there was a military officer, for help but they also proceeded to beat him. Finally, the journalist was handcuffed and arrested. This event took place two days after Sonny Figueroa, together with the journalist Marvin del Cid, published the report "The faces and profiles at the Centre of Government."³ "The Association of Journalists of Guatemala (APG) and its Committee on Freedom of the Press issued a statement in which it condemned the journalist's detention and stated that "the attack against Figueroa does not seem like a decision that the agents took unilaterally, but rather suggests that they acted under the direction of high-ranking police officers and authorities within the Presidency." ⁴ Figueroa was eventually released, with the judge ruling lack of merit.⁵

Four policemen are indicted for the illegal detention of social communicator Norma Sut Sancir⁶

The hearing against four PNC agents who participated in the illegal detention of Norma Sut Sancir in 2014 when she was carrying out her work as a journalist, took place on September 22 at the Court in Chiquimula. The four were indicted. The case was not decided in 2014, as the judge ruled lack of merit, but the Office for Crimes Against Journalists of the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) and the lawyer from the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights (CALDH), the journalist's legal representative, presented an injunction that was accepted and which has finally led to the agents being indicted.

On September 18, 2014, the day of the arrest, Norma was covering a peaceful demonstration near the Jupilingo Bridge, located at kilometer 204 of the highway that connects the municipality of Camotán with the Honduran border. "Not two minutes had passed following her arrival to the area, when a patrol car intercepted her and, without saying a word, the PNC agents detained her. Fifteen minutes earlier, more than 150 policemen had arrived at the protest with the aim of dispersing the demonstration." As Norma points out, "I was going to photograph what was happening as part of my journalistic work. When they saw me, up to ten officers grabbed me, dragged me and then handed me over to some female officers who immediately put me in handcuffs." At that time, the journalist was a correspondent with the Community Press and a communicator with the New Day Chorti Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCND).

Following the arrest, she was taken to the departmental capital of Chiquimula, but she did not appear before the judge and she was not allowed to make any calls until three in the afternoon. Norma was imprisoned for several days, until she was granted an audience with a judge on September 22. The judge ordered her release for lack of merit. Her detention was in breach of the times established by law for a first hearing. It took six years following the incident and her first hearing, for those responsible for her arrest to finally be brought to trial. They will now face criminal proceedings for violating freedom of expression and freedom of the press. The MP will have until December 22 to conduct an investigation ahead of the hearing on January 5, 2021. "Meanwhile, the four accused were ordered to remain under house arrest, banned from leaving the country and must present themselves every fifteen days to sign the file for monitoring the Substitute Measures".

IACHR presents two cases on Guatemala at the Inter-American Court and condemns attacks and murders of human rights defenders

"On August 7, 2020, the Inter-American Commission for Human Rights (IACHR) presented the case of the Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente Indigenous Community, with respect to Guatemala, before the Inter-American Court of Human Rights (IACourtHR). The case relates to the lack of internal legislation to guarantee the right of the Maya Q'eqchi' community to collective property, the granting and establishment of a mining project in its territory, and the absence of adequate and effective resources to demand the protection of their rights. (...) The Commission concluded that the State is responsible for the violation of the rights to recognition of

³ Gamazo, C., [Las 24 horas de pesadilla para el periodista Sonny Figueroa](#), No-Ficción, 13.09.2020.

⁴ Barrientos Castañeda, M., [Piden investigar detención del periodista Sonny Figueroa](#), Prensa Libre, 12.09.2020.

⁵ Pitán, E., [Juez ordena libertad de periodista Sonny Figueroa; MP debe investigar a PNC](#), Prensa Libre, 12.09.2020.

⁶ Arreaga, S., [Cuatro policías enfrentarán proceso penal por detención ilegal de la periodista Norma Sut Sancir](#), Ruda, Prensa Comunitaria, 23.09.2020.

legal personality and collective property.” It also pointed out “that the Guatemalan State granted an exploration and later exploitation license for the “Fénix” mining project, which includes part of the territories pertaining to the Maya Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente Community” and that there is no “information to demonstrate that the State complied with the right to free, prior and informed consultation, before granting permits, licenses and concessions to carry out the mining project on community lands.” Therefore, it considers that “the omissions in the preparation of the environmental impact study, as well as the exploration and exploitation licenses of the mining project constitute a violation of the rights to collective property, access to information, and participation in the matters likely to affect them.” It also states “that the rights to judicial guarantees and judicial protection were violated to the detriment of the community.” Based on the foregoing, the Commission concluded that the State of Guatemala is responsible for the violation of the rights recognized in Articles 3 (recognition of legal personality), 5.1 (personal integrity), 8.1 (judicial guarantees), 13 (freedom of thought and expression), 21 (collective property), 23 (political rights), and 25.1 (judicial protection) of the American Convention, in relation to Articles 1.1 and 2 of the same instrument, to the detriment of the Mayan Community Q'eqchi' Agua Caliente.” (see press release for recommendations)⁷

Another case presented by the IACHR before the Inter-American Court, on April 3, 2020, is that of “Maya Kaqchikel Indigenous Peoples of Sumpango et al., with respect to Guatemala.” The case relates to the obstacles faced by four community radio stations operated by indigenous peoples in Guatemala — Maya Kaqchikel, Maya Achí from San Miguel Chicaj, Maya Mam from Cajolá and Todos Santos de Cuchumatán — to freely exercise their rights to freedom of expression and culture due to the existence of legal obstacles to access radio frequencies, the maintenance of discriminatory norms in regulating radio broadcasting and a policy of criminalizing of community broadcasters operating without authorization in Guatemala.” In its report on the merits, the Commission determined that the right of indigenous peoples to found community broadcasting media, the enjoyment and exercise of the right to freedom of expression, through this media, and accessing a radio frequency, are protected by Article 13 of the American Convention.” It also “established that indigenous peoples in Guatemala face a situation of structural social exclusion, discrimination and poverty, which is manifested in their lack participation and representation in the media. He highlighted that the General Telecommunications Law establishes the highest financial bid as the only criterion for assigning frequencies, without taking into consideration that communities lack economic resources and are not competing on equal terms with the media for access to commercial radio frequencies, which created a situation of de facto inequality.” Thus, it concluded “that the cited regulations indirectly discriminated against the four peoples in the case, at the same time that they violated the rights of the members of those peoples to found communication media, express their ideas, disseminate information and their cultural worldview (...). In turn, it highlighted that the State has not adopted any measures (legislation, practice or policy) “to alleviate this situation, as well as the “high levels of concentration of ownership and control of radio and television by a small group of communication companies in the region.” Furthermore, the IACHR “observed that there is a strong criminalization of the operation of community radio stations in Guatemala,” considering “that the use of criminal offenses such as theft, aimed at punishing the use of the radio frequencies by two of the indigenous peoples in the case, was contrary to the requirements established in Article 13.2 of the American Convention on subsequent responsibilities” and “that the raiding and seizure of property in cases such as those analyzed, constituted a form of censorship and a disproportionate violation of the freedom of expression of indigenous peoples.” Based on all the foregoing, the Commission concluded that the State is responsible for the violation of the rights to freedom of expression, equality before the law, and cultural rights to the detriment of the four indigenous peoples in the case.” (see press release for recommendations)⁸

In addition to this, in its statement on September 11, the IACHR condemned “the recent spate of murders of human rights defenders who are members of indigenous organizations and defenders of land and territory in Guatemala,” expressing its concern at these events and calling on “the State to protect those who defend human rights in the country, as well as to conduct diligent investigations, taking into account the probable motive behind these events was the victims’ work in defending human rights.”⁹

⁷ CIDH-Comunicado de Prensa 211/20, [CIDH presenta caso sobre Guatemala ante la Corte Interamericana](#), 08.09.2020.

⁸ CIDH-Comunicado de Prensa 232-20, [La CIDH presenta caso sobre Guatemala ante la Corte Interamericana](#), 25.09.2020.

⁹ CIDH-Comunicado de Prensa 215-20, [La CIDH condena asesinatos y agresiones contra personas defensoras en Guatemala](#), 11.09.2020.

Other News of Interest

On September 22, the Maya-Q'eqchi' human rights defender María Magdalena Cuc Choc was summoned to a hearing to present evidence in the context of the case against her for accusations of aggravated trespassing, threats, and illegal detention by the *LISBAL Sociedad Anónima* company.¹⁰ This hearing was convened following the judge's decision to send the case to an oral and public hearing, despite the fact the co-complainant and their lawyer have abandoned the case. The case has been delayed for more than two years and the lawyer for the human rights defender, Wendy López, from the Indigenous Peoples Law Firm, has indicated that the process faced by María is a typical case of criminalization. Finally, the judge decided to suspend the hearing, which was rescheduled for May 6, 2021.¹¹

On September 24, the rapist and murderer of the human rights defender and indigenous leader Juana Raymundo Rivera was sentenced to 62 years in prison. The convicted man, Jacinto Brito Raymundo, was a member of the Campesino Development Committee (CODECA), as was the murdered human rights defender. "The lawyer Héctor Reyes, director of the Center for Legal Action on Human Rights (CALDH) considered the sentence to be "exemplary", as it is" one of the first femicide cases in Santa María Nebaj, Quiché." Reyes stressed that Brito engaged in a "a continuity "of violence" against Juana Raymundo from the age of 12 years until she was 24, when she was brutally and cruelly murdered."¹² This terrible crime was committed on July 28, 2018 in the midst of a wave of murders of human rights defenders.

September 11 marked the 30th anniversary of the assassination of the anthropologist Myrna Elizabeth Mack Chang, ordered by the Presidential General Staff (EMP), who "considered her to be an internal enemy and carried out terrorist actions against her. The aim was punish her for her academic work, which sought to uncover the counterinsurgency strategy used against displaced populations who were forced to live as nomads in the mountains because of the persecution from the Army. Myrna paid for her investigations into this cruel and inhumane practice against the population and for daring to pursue her academic work and to expose the military barbarism in Guatemala to the world, with her life." As Iduvina Hernández has pointed out, the persistence of Myrna's sister, Helen Mack, in the fight against impunity has led to transcendental changes in the Guatemalan justice system, therefore "as a society we need to rescue and regain the scope" of her contributions "to the transformation of justice in Guatemala."¹³

¹⁰ Front Line Defenders, [Acoso judicial a María Magdalena Cuc Choc](#), 24.01.2020.

¹¹ Solis, N., [La defensora q'eqchi' María Choc se presenta a la audiencia de ofrecimiento de prueba](#), 22.09.2020.

¹² TelesUR, [Condenan a 62 años de cárcel a asesino de activista guatemalteca](#), 25.09.2020.

¹³ Hernández, I., [Treinta años después](#), Plaza Pública, 10.09.2020.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS

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 defense of territory.¹⁴



As with the previous month we continue to accompany human rights defenders through phone calls and virtual meetings, without a physical presence on the ground, thus complying with the measures decreed by the Government in response to the pandemic. During this month, we have also held virtual meetings with civil society organizations, Guatemalan authorities and the diplomatic corps.

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

This month we maintained permanent telephone contact with the lawyers from the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)**.

A hearing was scheduled on September 7 at the criminal branch of Sixth Court of Appeals for drug activity and crimes against the environment of Cobán, Alta Verapaz, in relation to the judges' decisions following the presentation of several appeals in the case of the criminalization of the q'eqchi' leader and defender of the territory **Bernardo Caal Xol**. Bernardo's lawyers confirmed, however, that instead of the scheduled hearing, the Chamber only delivered a document in which the appeal was rejected and the sentence of seven years and four months against Bernardo was upheld. Furthermore, the Court notified in the document that they had decided to modify the sentence for the crime of illegal detention of which the defender is accused, which had been set at one year and four months, commutable. The decision of the court, means was to declare this sentence as non-commutable, in which case it cannot be covered by the payment of a fine, forcing him to serve the entire sentence in prison.

On September 9, the High Risk Court B in Guatemala City, presided over by Miguel Ángel Gálvez, refused to grant house arrest to Benedicto Lucas García and Manuel Antonio Callejas, retired army officers who have been indicted in criminal proceedings for their involvement in the **Ixil Genocide case** during the internal armed conflict. The officers, who remain in the Military Medical Center hospital, had argued that the risk of contagion from Covid-19 should allow them to remain in their homes while the MP develops the investigations. However, the judge declared the request inadmissible for two reasons: there is a previous conviction in this case and all people are equally exposed to the virus, so he does not consider it appropriate to make an exception.

In the framework of the **CREOMPAZ case**, on September 10, a public hearing was scheduled to resolve the injunction filed by the Chicoyou community against the Second Criminal Court Judge of Cobán, for approving the eviction from their territory which was implemented by the Guatemalan army through the Munitions Factory. Due to the lack of an interpreter in the Court, they decided to reschedule this hearing. The new date is pending confirmation.

We continue to monitor the security situation of the **The Association of Neighbors of Chicoyogüito de Alta Verapaz (AVECHAV)**. Its members have shared their concerns about the impacts of the pandemic, and the measures to combat it, are having on community work (closure of markets and restrictions on mobility and transportation). This has also complicated the possibility of meeting as an Association and is severely affecting and limiting the activities of its members to sustain themselves financially.

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

Lesbia Artola Peyul and Imelda Teyul, coordinators with the **Community Council of the Highlands (CCDA) - Las Verapaces Region**, have continued to face serious security incidents. This month they confirmed that there are three criminalization processes against them. The Indigenous Peoples Law Firm

¹⁴ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

(BPI) is providing them with legal accompaniment. PBI are very concerned about the physical, psychological and emotional wellbeing of both human rights defenders.

On September 20, we accompanied Lesbia Artola by telephone during the Alta Verapaz agrarian pre-conference that took place in Cobán.

We continue to monitor the of the situation of the Dos Fuentes and Washington families, from the municipality of Purulhá, Baja Verapaz, as they have been subject to multiple attacks and attempts to evict them at the hands of private actors in recent months.

We have also remained very attentive to the situation of the criminalized and imprisoned human rights defenders Jorge Coc and Marcelino Xol. They were sentenced to 35 years in prison 10 months ago and the appeal of this sentence was rejected by the Sixth Chamber of the Cobán criminal branch. For this reason, the BPI, who are representing their case, have filed an appeal before the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ). On September 1, we observed a press conference organized by the BPI and CCDA about this case.

PBI continues to express concerns in relation to the complicated situation that the members of the organization are experiencing to both national and international institutions, as well as with civil society organizations.

As part of our accompaniment of the **Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)**, this month we maintained contact with their members over the telephone as well as a number of virtual meetings. Under the framework of this accompaniment we express our utmost concern over the disappearance of Carlos Enrique Coy, from the Nueva Gloria Community in the municipality of Purulhá, Baja Verapaz. Carlos disappeared on August 3 when he was on his way to work and as of now his whereabouts remain unknown.

During this month, we have followed-up particularly on the situation of Justino Ilom from the La Primavera Community (San Cristóbal, Alta Verapaz). For years, several families from this community have organized through the UVOC to defend their right to land. In January 2015, they obtained their property titles following an agreement with the Ministry of Agrarian Affairs (SAA), in which the Maderas Filitz company, the Azurdia family and the community participated. In July 2015, 279 families from La Primavera received 15 *caballerías* of land per family from the logging company. Despite the fact that the families were able to recover their lands, there are still strong economic interests surrounding this case, which is why various actors have hampered the land measurement processes and, on multiple occasions, have failed to respect the land rights of the community members. A clear example of this situation is that illegal logging has been carried out on the UVOC families' land. This situation has been denounced by members of the organization, including Justino, who, in February 2019, presented at the MP in Cobán to denounce these activities. He was arrested in that moment with the excuse of his alleged involvement in crimes against the community's forestry resources. He was released following several procedures but the case against him remains open. The hearings in his case were finally held in Cobán on the 17th and 20th of this month, during which we accompanied both Justino and his lawyer, Jorge Luis Morales, by telephone. We are awaiting the resolutions of both hearings.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

We continued to monitor the worrying security situation of the **New Day Chorti Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCND)** closely throughout the month as aggressions against its members have not ceased.

We are concerned about the security situation in the Olopa communities, whose members have been suffering threats, raids and robberies as a result of their involvement in the peaceful resistance to mining and other extractive projects. On September 3, we accompanied one of their members to file a complaint with the Crimes Against Activists Unit from the MP (in the capital), for the raid and theft of documents perpetrated at his home in August.

Likewise, we continue to monitor community leaders Héctor Ovidio Vázquez, from the community of Lelá Chancó, and Pedro Esquivel, from the community of Lelá Obraje, in the municipality of Camotán, Chiquimula. They are suffering constant threats, defamations and surveillance as a result of their work as human rights defenders. We maintain daily contact with both, in addition to meetings with national and international authorities to express concern about their situation.

We have maintained telephone contact with the members of the **Peaceful Resistance La Puya**, who have maintained their sit-in and are monitoring the arbitration process between the company and the state.

The **Peaceful Resistance of La Laguna**, San Pedro Ayampuc continue to experience a diversity of problems including water pollution, logging and food shortages which they are addressing through collective organisation.

As noted at the beginning of this section, on September 7, the Sixth Court of Appeal rejected the appeal and increased the sentence against the criminalized and imprisoned human rights defender Bernardo Caal Xol, a member of the **Peaceful Resistance of Cahabón**. This decision has generated much concern, discomfort and frustration for Bernardo, his family members and members of the Resistance. There have been many national and international human rights defenders and organizations who have expressed their concern over this sentence and the criminalization that Bernardo has experienced. The Communities held a peaceful march in Cahabón on September 28 to demand the freedom of the Cahabón and Ox-eek 'rivers, central pillars in the life of the Q'eqchi' people, as well as the immediate freedom for Bernardo, who has been persecuted and criminalized for defending the rights of indigenous peoples. On September 29, Bernardo's team of lawyers filed an appeal against the sentence with the Judicial Branch in Guatemala City.

Conflicts between the Oxec company, owner of the hydroelectric plant located on the Cahabón River, and the communities that are part of the Peaceful Resistance, continue. At the beginning of September, the defenders that we accompanied in Cahabón shared with us that the company has not respected the ownership of land that belongs to the Sepoc community and has been using it for its own activities without the community's permission. For this reason, indigenous authorities and community leaders have organized and displayed information signs indicating that these lands belong to the Sepoc village.

We have maintained constant contact with **TZ'KAT - Network of Ancestral Healers from Community Feminism**. We provide accompaniment by telephone in their activities in accompanying and healing with women human rights defenders at risk. On September 17, we met in person with two of their members so they could inform us about their situation.

Chinautla Multisector, continue to respond to the lack of access to water and food shortages through mobilization and organization. We continue to monitor the security situation of their members.

The security situation of Abelino Mejía Cancino, member of the the **Retalhuleu Community Council (CCR)** and leader of the Multicultural community Olga Marina Cuchuapán of the municipality of Champerico (Rethaluleu) continues to experience surveillance, threats and intimidation. PBI has maintained meetings with national and international authorities to express our concern about his security situation and the criminalization that he, as well as three of his colleagues, are experiencing. A hearing in this case was scheduled for October 2, in which they are charged with the crimes of coercion, threats and illegal detentions, but it was suspended and rescheduled for January 15, 2021

We continue to accompany, via telephone, the president of the **Association of Neighbors Against Corruption in Patzicía (AVCCP)**, Carlos Sajmoló Pichiya.

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.

As part of our dialogue with the diplomatic corps and international organizations present in Guatemala, we met virtually with the following people this month:

- Michael Grewe, Head of Cooperation with the **German Embassy in Guatemala**. This meeting was held jointly with other Guatemalan and international organizations. The objective was to address the administrative difficulties and obstacles that non-governmental organizations have to face.
- Christine Pirenne, **Ambassador of the Netherlands in Costa Rica** and Carolien Embden Andres, head of cooperation and human rights at this Embassy.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA ADAPTED TO THE CONTEXT OF THE PANDEMIC

On September 3, 10 and 17, PBI Guatemala participated in the **Virtual Meeting of International Accompaniment Organizations**, along with other organizations who provide protection to human rights defenders in Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica/Nicaragua, Honduras and Guatemala. This Meeting is usually organized annually in person, but due to COVID-19 it was held virtually this year. During this meeting we shared the challenges that the pandemic has created across the various dimensions of accompaniment and we reflected on the lessons learned, the achievements and future plans aimed at strengthening the accompaniment work despite the obstacles posed by the pandemic.

In our **ACÉRCATE** program this month, we spoke with Carlos Sajmoló Pichiyá, representative of the AVCCP, about the exercise of citizenship and the fight against corruption at the local level in Patzicía. [You can access the video through our website.](#)

5. ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA OUTSIDE 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.

The European Representative held meetings with:

- Thomas Peyker, the recently appointed **Ambassador of the European Union for Guatemala**, and with Tomás Reyes Ortega, **Head of the European External Action Service (EEAS) for Guatemala**, Brussels.
- Fritz Boehm, **Guatemala Desk at the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**, Geneva.

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.



Asociación Maya UK'ux B'e

CONDENAMOS REPRESIÓN CONTRA COMUNICADORAS DEL PUEBLO K'ICHE

El Consejo de los Pueblos K'iches y la Asociación Maya UK'ux B'e, condenamos la captura de Anastasia Mejía Tiriquis de 49 años de edad y su traslado a la cárcel de mujeres de Quetzaltenango, ella es Guía Espiritual del Pueblo Maya, activista en contra de la corrupción e impunidad, comunicadora de la Radio Xol Abaj que ha sido allanada en el Municipio de Joyabaj, del departamento del Quiché, también fue capturada Petrona Siy Castro anciana de 68 años de edad. Ambas son acusadas de participar en los disturbios dados el 24 del mes de agosto, en contra del Alcalde Municipal que se ha reelegido durante varios períodos.

Anastasia como comunicadora y cumpliendo con su papel de dar a conocer los acontecimientos de ese día (24 de agosto) en su municipio y los videos que circularon de ese acontecimiento, dan fe que ella estaba llamando a la calma a la muchedumbre que manifestaba su descontento con el alcalde municipal y nunca fue vista como incitadora a la violencia.

Nos preocupa que esta captura esté cargada de racismo, que se ha venido practicando en los diferentes espacios políticos y del sistema de justicia. Lo anterior debido a que un período anterior Anastasia Mejía fungió como concejal municipal, espacio donde cuestionó los procedimientos administrativos. Es importante dar a conocer que en este lugar siempre se ha visto a los pueblos indígenas como los peones coloniales, sin derecho a opinar o a manifestar cualquier divergencia con el poder local de herencia colonial y este mismo poder en diferentes partes del país, vienen cooptando la justicia para seguir con los actos de impunidad y corrupción.

También condenamos la agresión que sufrieron las hermanas Andrea y Lucia Ixchiu, el día de ayer, mujeres que ejercen un liderazgo a nivel nacional e internacional por la defensa de los derechos humanos y la defensa de Madre Tierra.

Por lo que alertamos a la comunidad nacional e internacional, para estar vigilantes sobre los acontecimientos en Guatemala en relación a la violación de los Derechos Humanos, ya que existe un claro retorno a las formas represivas, que nos recuerda los años oscuros de la guerra donde el derecho a opinar era un delito, donde los pueblos indígenas fueron masacrados por el mismo Estado, que se ha venido denunciando como un acto de genocidio. Durante ese período en el departamento del Quiché se concentraron las masacres llegando al 46% de los muertos a nivel nacional.

Las acciones en contra de tres mujeres K'iches en un solo día, refleja que la fuerza de la impunidad se está imponiendo a través del terror, como única forma que tiene el sistema por silenciar la voz de los pueblos que claman justicia, claman derechos y demandan el fin del racismo impuesto por quinientos años.

Necesitamos la más amplia solidaridad.

Oxib' Aj

22 de septiembre 2020.

PBI team in Guatemala: Júlía Sierra (Spain), María Lafuente (Spain), Carla Güell Font (Spain), Paola Sarti (Italy), Inma Jorge Aymeric (Spain) y Alejandro Cerdá Aparicio (Spain).

All photos published are from PBI

PBI GUATEMALA DOES NOT NECESSARILY IDENTIFY WITH THE OPINIONS AND CONTENT OF THE REPRODUCED ARTICLES AND MEDIA RELEASES.

**GUATEMALA PROJECT
PEACE BRIGADES INTERNATIONAL**

Website: www.pbi-guatemala.org

facebook: [pbiguatemala](https://www.facebook.com/pbiguatemala)

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