



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 191 - August 2019

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.

Gender violence plagues Guatemala

The Law Against Femicide and Other Forms of Violence Against Women was created in 2008 and defines femicide as the “violent death of a woman, caused by the context of unequal power relations between men and women”.¹ Nevertheless, violence against women continues to be a brutal reality in Guatemala: according to the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF), between 2014 and 2018 there were 3,774 violent deaths of women who were shot, stabbed, beheaded, dismembered or suffocated (723 in 2018, 772 in 2017, 739 in 2016, 766 in 2015 and 774 in 2014)², and between January 1 and August 12 of 2019 there have been 401 murders.³ The vast majority of femicides are never solved. In Guatemala, only 6% of cases result in judicial convictions.⁴

One of the few cases that has come to trial is that of Juana Raymundo, a 24-year-old Ixil Mayan woman, community leader and member of the Peasant Development Committee (CODECA) and the Nebaj executive committee of the Movement for the Liberation of Peoples Party (MLP), who was murdered on July 28, 2018 by her partner. On August 15, 2019, the trial against Jacinto Brito began in the Femicide Court of Santa Cruz del Quiché. The accused physically and sexually assaulted Juana before killing her and then throwing her body into a stream.⁵

Seminar “The fight against corruption and impunity in Guatemala: we did it together!”

On August 20 and 21, the Seminar “The fight against corruption and impunity in Guatemala: we did it together!” took place with participation from various sectors of civil society, indigenous authorities, journalists, as well as officials from the Judicial Organism (OJ), the Office for Public Prosecutions (MP) and the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office (PDH) participated. The final Report of the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) “The Legacy of Justice in Guatemala” was presented at the event. The first ever CICIG commissioner, Carlos Castresana, spoke about the CICIG's contributions to Guatemala via video conference. A group of people stood up with posters protesting the work of the CICIG and shouted slogans in order to discredit the ex-commissioner's words while his speech was being projected. The intervention of Iván Velásquez, current commissioner, increased the tension among the CICIG's detractors.⁶

“The results highlighted by the Commission included the achievement of more than 400 convictions and the presentation of 120 “high impact” cases that were prosecuted during their mandate (...). The Commission together with the MP identified 70 criminal organizations dedicated to human trafficking, corruption, drug trafficking and extrajudicial executions, as well as “high power” structures. (...) During the 12 years of the Commission's work, more than 1,540 people were charged and 660 are currently

¹ Maldonado, J., [401 mujeres han muerto violentamente este año](#), Publinews, 15.08.2019.

² Meléndez, J., [Feminicidios azotan a Centroamérica](#), El Universal, 27.08.2019.

³ Maldonado, J., Op. Cit.

⁴ La Silla Rota, [Mujeres migrantes de Guatemala también huyen del machismo](#), 20.08.2019.

⁵ Maldonado, J., Op. Cit..

⁶ España, M., [Grupo anti-Cicig protesta en presentación de informe de cierre](#), Prensa Libre, 20.08.2019.

awaiting trial”.⁷ Another of the achievements highlighted by Velásquez was the promotion of legal reforms and the strengthening of the MP. José Ugaz, former president of Transparency International, indicated “that CICIG is a valuable model that will continue to be relevant in the fight against corruption worldwide”⁸.

Repression in La Trementina

Villagers and residents of the community of La Trementina, located in the department of Zacapa, denounced that the illegal logging of trees is being carried out in the mountains of Las Granadillas. They also pointed out abuses, by the National Civil Police (PNC), against people who oppose this practice.⁹ The forest is the only source of water in the region. Social organizations and affected communities have been demanding that the mountain be declared a protected area by the National Council of Protected Areas (CONAP) for over 10 years.¹⁰

Attacks against the inhabitants of several communities from the region have intensified since the complaint was filed: on August 9, two young human rights defenders were illegally and arbitrarily detained by PNC officers; there is an open judicial process against the human rights defenders José Pilar Álvarez Cabrera and Melvin Antón y Antón; on August 15, the PNC used violence against the La Trementina community and the communities that inhabit Las Granadillas, who continue to participate in the resistance to protect their territory and water sources.¹¹

According to the National Forest Institute (INAB), the felling of trees in La Trementina corresponds to a sanitation plan for the forested area due to a plague of weevils that has affected the pine plantations. However, the Council of Maya Chortí Authorities and the “New Day Chorti” Campesino Central Coordinator, issued a statement in which they indicated that this felling is illegal and is being carried out for the benefit of local farmers who are supporting certain economic interests in the region.¹² According to this statement, the excessive logging in the forest is causing further environmental problems in this region, including prolonged droughts.¹³

Questions on the election of magistrates for the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ)

The Nomination Commissions for magistrates to the CSJ, the Court of Appeals and other courts of the same level, published a call for applications from those interested in forming part of the list of 26 nominees to the (CSJ) and 270 (Court of Appeals and other courts) to hand in the required documentation. The deadline for submission of applications ends on August 30. In the case of the application for the CSJ, the Commission decided not to include the ethical merits in the points table, which could facilitate the participation of people linked to organized crime. Constitutionalist lawyer Gabriel Orellana showed his concern in this regard and pointed out that this is a problem largely due to the instability and lack of independence of the judges.¹⁴ Mayan, Garífuna and Xincas Ancestral Authorities issued a statement on the role of the Nomination Commissions demanding that this process be carried out in a transparent manner.¹⁵

⁷ Montepeque, F., [CICIG destaca más de 400 condenas en su informe](#), El Periodico, 21.08.2019.

⁸ La Hora, Op.Cit..

⁹ Quino, H., [Denuncian tala de árboles en la montaña Las Granadillas, Zacapa](#), La Hora 19.08.2019.

¹⁰ Communique from New Day Chorti Central Campesino Coordinator Ch'orti (CCCND), 15.8.2019

¹¹ Letter from the Lutheran Church of Guatemala (ILUGUA) to the Human Rights Ombudsman's Office, 12.8.2019

¹² Quino, H., [Inab dice que tala de árboles en La Trementina es por plaga de gorgojos](#), La Hora 21.08.2019.

¹³ Comunique from CCCND, Op. Cit.

¹⁴ Juárez, E., [CSJ: Poca valoración de la ética facilita oscuras participaciones](#), La Hora, 23.08.2019.

¹⁵ Aguilar, D., [Autoridades Indígenas exigen transparencia en elección de Cortes](#), La Hora, 19.08.2019.

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 territory¹⁶.

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

During the month of August we have held regular meetings with the members of the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** and we have accompanied them to the hearings in the following cases:

- Case against Samuel Choc for aggravated trespassing. He is accused of the crime of aggravated trespassing on the lands belonging to the company Tecniservicios Agroindustriales S.A, in the village Las Mercedes (Chisec, Alta Verapaz). At the hearing, which took place on August 1 in the Alta Verapaz High Court in Cobán, the defense requested a review of the substitute measures that had been granted to Samuel arguing the extreme poverty of the accused. The judge reduced the bond from Q25,000 to Q8,000.
- Case of the Virgin de La Asunción “Safe Home”. On August 8, we accompanied the hearing in at the Courthouse in Guatemala City during which the coercion measures against four of the defendants were reviewed relating to the events that took place in the Virgin de La Asunción “Safe Home” in San José de Pinula (Guatemala) on March 7 and 8, 2017, in which 41 girls died. The measures were not replaced by substitute measures and the defendants remain in jail.

We have followed the security situation of the **Chicoyogüito Neighborhood Association of Alta Verapaz (AVECHAV)** and we have met with some of its members.

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND



On August 9, we accompanied Jorge Luis Morales, lawyer for the **Union of Peasants Organizations (UVOC)**, to the Second Criminal Court of First Instance in Cobán for a hearing as part of the intermediate stage in the process against Justino Xollim, accused of illegal logging on the estate of La Primavera (Alta Verapaz). The Judge declared the provisional closure of the case and gave the MP 6 months to carry out an investigation to establish who is actually responsible for felling the trees. The court also ordered for the cessation of all coercive measures against the accused.

In August we continued our visits to the offices of the **Community Council of the Highlands (CCDA) - Las Verapaces Region** and met with their leaders on several occasions. We also attended two oral and public hearings in the case against Jorge Coc Coc and Marcelino Xol Cucul, members of CCDA who have been criminalized and imprisoned. These hearings took place on August 2 and 16 in the Second Criminal Sentence Court for Drug Trafficking and Environmental Crimes in Cobán (Alta Verapaz). These hearings focused on testimonies from medical experts, criminal investigators and eyewitnesses. The hearing scheduled for August 29 was suspended and postponed until September. As in previous months, we visited the two criminalized human rights defenders at the Cobán Penitentiary Center.

As part of this same accompaniment we visited the community of Nimlasachal, Cobán (Alta Verapaz), members of CCDA, at their meeting in the Secretariat of Agrarian Affairs (SAA) of Guatemala City where

¹⁶ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: [Groups and individuals currently accompanied by PBI](#)

they presented the results of the Registry and Cadastral Study of their community.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

This month we have been closely monitoring the security situation of the members of the **New Day Chorti Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCND)** following the violent events of July 8 in the community of Lelá Chancó, Camotán (Chiquimula), in which three workers of the Interoceanic Corridor were killed. Throughout August, and as a result of these events, different members of the organization have been victims of surveillance, attacks and intimidation. We have intensified our accompaniment as a result, by increasing telephone follow-up and holding continued meetings with the leaders of the organization. Additionally, we accompanied the CCCND to the CSJ where they delivered an injunction against the Minister for Energy and Mines (MEM) requesting the closure of the “Cantera Los Manantiales” antimony extraction mine located between the municipalities of Olopa and Esquipulas (Chiquimula).

We continue to monitor the situation of the **Peaceful Resistance of La Puya** (municipalities of San José del Golfo and San Pedro Ayampuc). The Resistance also continues to monitor the international arbitration process that is taking place between the US mining company Kappes Cassiday & Associates and the State of Guatemala.

Within the framework of our accompaniment to the **Peaceful Resistance Cahabón** (Alta Verapaz), we visited the human rights defender Bernardo Caal Xol at the Cobán Penitentiary Center. On August 10 we accompanied the Resistance and the Madre Selva Ecological Collective to the community of Chiis, Cahabón, where a meeting was held in which the organisation produced evidence on the impacts that the Oxec III project, led by the Renace company, would have on the Puliabic river. On August 29 we accompanied the Resistance to the Congress of the Republic for presentation of its complaint against the Oxec company for trying to build a third dam in their territory and for contributing to the criminalization of their member Bernardo Caal.



We continue to accompany **TZK'AT - Network of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism from Iximulew**, by holding meetings with them and following up on their security situation.

We accompanied members of the **Multisector Chinaulta** to Chuarrancho (Guatemala) where they met with representatives of the Indigenous Mayor's Office and the Ancestral Authorities of this municipality. We also continue to follow up on the lawsuit they have filed against the Municipality of Chinaulta for breaching the commitments related to the community's right to water.

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 with the following people this month:

- Roberta de Beltranena, Program Officer, **Embassy of Switzerland**.
- Sjoerd ten Wolde, Second Secretary for Politics and Human Rights, **Dutch Embassy in Costa Rica**; and Jordi Zuur, Official for Central America of the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in The Hague**.
- Mary Nameth, Human Rights Officer, **US Embassy**.
- Mónica Izáguirre, Political Officer, **Canadian Embassy**.
- Jackeline Ruiz, Officer from the Unit for Social and Cultural Economic Rights of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (**OHCHR**).

At national, departmental and municipal level we meet with the following authorities:

- Juan de Dios Pineda, Municipal Manager, **Municipality of Jocotán**.
- Elvia Vázquez, Officer, **Camotán PNC**.
- Emilio Pineda, Analyst, **PDH Office in Chiquimula**.
- Mario Alfonso Villafuerte Cruz, **Governor of Chiquimula**.
-

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA IN GUATEMALA

On August 9 and 10, a **Healing Workshop** was held in Cobán (Alta Verapaz) as a protection tool for women human rights defenders from the Peaceful Resistance of Cahabón and the Community Council of the Highlands (CCDA) - Las Verapaces Region. This space was facilitated by the Network of Ancestral Healers of Community Feminism from Iximulew. The objective of the workshop was to strengthen the integrated protection capabilities of women human rights defenders from the perspective of emotional and spiritual healing as the central axis of protection for women human rights defenders who are at risk.

On August 17 and 18, also in Cobán, a **Workshop on Protection and Security** for human rights defenders from CCDA - Las Verapaces Region took place. This workshop was held in q'eqchi and focused on strengthening the capacities of the attendees to react to situations of criminalization suffered through their work for human rights. The workshop focused on this issue because criminalization is one of the most frequent risks faced by the human rights defenders of Alta Verapaz.

Both spaces served for the participants to build and establish networks and alliances of mutual support, which constitutes another fundamental element in the security and protection of human rights defenders.

5. NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

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

TZK'AT- RED DE SANADORAS ANCESTRALES DEL FEMINISMO COMUNITARIO TERRITORIAL DESDE IXIMULEW- GUATEMALA

DEFENSA DEL TERRITORIO CUERPO-TIERRA-AMAZÓNICA

¡No fue el fuego, fue el estado patriarcal, ecocida neoliberal!

Desde Iximulew- Guatemala, nosotras mujeres originarias en pluralidad de existencias en ésta Abya Yala como Feministas Comunitarias Territoriales, **convocamos al acuerpamiento espiritual y mundial por el duelo territorial, espiritual y político** que en estos momentos están sufriendo los pueblos ancestrales, la selva, la fauna y la vida espiritual de la Amazonía. Desde la distancia abrazamos a los pueblos hermanos, por el dolor profundo de las niñas, niños, niñas, las mujeres, compañeros y compañeras, las abuelas, abuelos, abueles, los cuerpos plurales que por resguardo de la vida, han tenido que desplazarse de manera urgente por la violencia ejercida por el estado patriarcal, racista, colonial, capitalista, ecocida y neoliberal del gobierno de Bolsonaro.

Hace 4 días, miles de hermanas de 130 pueblos ancestrales de la Amazonia denunciaban en Brasilia, las graves implicaciones para el territorio ancestral amazónico a partir de la imposición de las políticas desarrollistas del gobierno de Bolsonaro, no es casualidad el incendio: **es respuesta patriarcal Neoliberal**, porque ellas **demandaban: "Territorio: nosso corpo-nosso espirito"- "Territorio: Nuestro cuerpo- nuestro espíritu"**

Convocamos mundialmente:

Enciende tu candela blanca en la casa, la comunidad, la organización, la ciudad donde te encuentres, acompáñala de semillas, frutos, agua, tierra, flores, piedras, conchas o cualquier elemento natural desde cualquier lugar del mundo, como un acto de consciencia cotidiana en nuestras prácticas por el cuidado y justicia de la tierra.

Acuerpémonos para **demandar justicia** por el duelo de los pueblos ancestrales de la amazonía, por los animales y sus crías que han muerto calcinados, por los árboles, las semillas, las flores, las fuentes de agua, lxs espíritus y vida de la selva que están sufriendo esta violencia patriarcal neoliberal.

Con esa luz enviamos nuestro amor espiritual, nuestras fuerzas, vitalidad y compromiso por seguir defendiendo la vida porque; **Lain ut laat- Laat ut lain= Tú, soy yo, y yo soy tú.**

Envíanos una fotografía al correo katsanadorasixim@gmail.com , para enviar el acuerpamiento espiritual mundial a las hermanas, hermanos y hermanes de los pueblos amazónicos.

Liki tuyuhaki na altepet- kwerpo-narú

Defensa y recuperación de territorio **corpo-tierra**

Iximulew, 9 Ajmaq- Guatemala, 23 de agosto 2019.

PBI team in Guatemala: Viviana Annunziata (Italy), Sara Lodi (Italy), Sophie Mailly (Canada), Diana Cabra Delgado (Colombia), Katharina Wagner (Germany), Begoña Navarro (Spain), Ignacio Hernández (Spain), Lucie Costamagna (France).

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)

Office of the team in Guatemala
3ª Avenida "A" 3-51, Zona 1
Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala
Phone/ Fax: (+502) 2220 1032
E-mail: equipo@pbi-guatemala.org

Office of the project Coordination
Avenida Entrevías 76, 4º B
28053 Madrid, Estado Español
Telephone: (+34) 918 543 150
Email: coordinacion@pbi-guatemala.org