



Monthly Information Package Guatemala

Number 208 - January 2021

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.

Alarming increase in poverty, extreme poverty and acute malnourishment

According to the report "The Virus of Inequality" presented by Oxfam, while the world's richest recovered their pre-pandemic level of wealth within nine months, "recovery for the poorest people could take more than a decade". Estimates for Guatemala, made by the Central American Institute for Fiscal Studies (ICEFI), are chilling: more than 1,236,000 people will be added to the 8.5 million who lived in poverty before the pandemic and about 110,000 will move from poverty into extreme poverty. In addition, Oxfam points out that the pandemic has revealed the serious limitations of the health system, which is highly privatized and excludes large sections of the population. It has also brought to light pre-existing conditions of inequality which have meant that this crisis has had, once again, a differentiated impact depending on factors such as gender, ethnicity, geographic area or income level. Another indicator of the strong existing inequality is that "while many companies have maintained their normal pace, uninterrupted by quarantines, workers in the informal sector, as well as care workers have borne the brunt of the crisis." Furthermore, the social and economic impact following the passage of storms Eta and Iota through the region have exacerbated the terrible situation that large sectors of the country's population are experiencing.¹

With regard to acute malnutrition (AD), the report indicates that this increased by 80% between 2019 and 2020: according to the National Information System of Food and Nutrition Security of Guatemala, the AD went from 15,395 children in 2019 to 27,913 in 2020, "a dramatic increase in those who cannot even access basic food within the early childhood group."² Malnutrition does not only affect children, but women also, and this also affects their children, because when the nutrition during pregnancy is deficient, women in turn give birth to babies with low weight, meaning the cycle of malnutrition repeats itself.³

Violence against women and the inauguration of new Holistic Care Model

On January 11, the Holistic Care Model for Women Victims of Violence I'x Kem (MAIMI), was inaugurated. Its objective is to provide comprehensive care to women in response to multiple types of gender-based violence. It is made up of entities such as the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP), the Judiciary (OJ), the Ministries of Health, Finance, Education, Labor and Government, the Institute of Public Criminal Defense (IDDP), the National Institute of Forensic Sciences (INACIF) and the Office for the Defense of Indigenous Women (DEMI), among others.⁴ The services it intends to provide include: medical, psychological and social care; legal assistance; activation of the Isabel Claudina Alert system for cases of disappearance; culturally appropriate care and interpretation services for the principal Mayan languages; education and training activities; measures aimed at generating employment etc.⁵ It is important to note that the inauguration of MAIMI took place during a tragic month, in which we lament the brutal rape and

¹ Ortiz, G., *OXFAM: Más de 1.2 millones se sumarán a la pobreza en GT*, La Hora, 26.01.2021.

² *Ibidem*.

³ Ola, A. L., *Desnutrición aguda: aumento de casos en 2021 sería mayor por la pandemia y las tormentas*, Prensa Libre, 27.01.2021.

⁴ Redacción, *I'x Kem: nuevo modelo de atención integral para mujeres víctimas de violencia*, Prensa Comunitaria, 11.01.2021.

⁵ García, M., *Autoridades firman convenio interinstitucional para dar atención a mujeres víctimas de violencia*, La Hora, 11.01.2021.

femicide of the girl Hillary Saraí Arredondo de León, only 3 years old (in Tiquisate, Escuintla),⁶ the femicide of an investigator of the Public Prosecutor's Office for Children and Adolescents, Luz María del Rocío López Morales (in Guatemala City)⁷ and the rape of a woman by two agents of the National Civil Police (PNC) in Escuintla.⁸

Regarding the implementation of MAIMI, Paula Barrios, from Mujeres Transformando el Mundo, points out that "it is important to institutionalize processes and rather than trying to present new ones with each change of an official, to appear to be carrying out actions in favor of women. The pre-existing model (MAINA) is functional, perhaps it can be strengthened or expanded to all departments, since the intention is to ensure it has cultural and linguistic relevance." In addition, she is concerned about the location of MAIMI in a red zone of the Capital, as it causes concern among the litigants who accompany the women. Barrios affirms that there is no accessible and efficient transportation service to get there, nor is there a place to park the cars, and the perception of insecurity this creates is worrying.⁹

At the MAIMI inauguration ceremony, the Attorney General, María Consuelo Porras, handed the key to MAIMI to the Minister of the Interior, Gendri Reyes. The latter has provoked strong criticism from the Guatemalan civil society, as they consider Reyes responsible for the excessive use of police force against the population during the peaceful demonstrations of November 21 last year, where there were a number of women arrested.¹⁰

Last year the MP registered more than 60,000 complaints of violence against women, an average of 164 per day. The total number of violent deaths of women for 2020 as of December 11 was 785, of which 388 were femicides, according to the Woman's Observatory. Karina Méndez, executive director at the Institute of Comparative Studies in Criminal Sciences of Guatemala (ICCPG), indicated that "in terms of the justice sector, between 30% and 35% of the reported cases [of violence against women] are being solved, while between 65% and 70% are under investigation." Cases of femicide or violence against women, between the initial complaint to the sentence, take more than 600 days to be resolved.¹¹

Repression against Honduran migrant caravan

During the night of January 15-16, more than 9,000 people from Honduras entered Guatemala through the El Florido border, located 200 kilometers west of Guatemala City. These people were part of a migrant caravan which left the Honduran city of San Pedro Sula in different phases. Their final destination is the United States and their objective is to try to access better living conditions and escape the poverty and violence that plague the region and which have increased since the pandemic and with the impact of the Eta and Iota storms.¹²

In addition to requesting the Honduran authorities to stop the flow of migrants, the government, presided over by Alejandro Giammattei, declared a state of prevention in the departments of Izabal, Zacapa, Chiquimula, Jutiapa, El Progreso, Petén and Santa Rosa as of the 13th.¹³ Guatemalan security forces violently repressed the advance of the caravan. The migrants were attacked with sticks and tear gas bombs by members of the Army. The Guatemalan Migration Institute confirmed to journalists that several people were reported injured, including its personnel, migrants and members of the Army.¹⁴

⁶ Redacción, [Capturan a tres presuntos responsables del femicidio de Hillary de 3 años](#), La Hora, 19.01.2021.

⁷ García, O., [Capturan al esposo de Luz María del Rocío López Morales presunto responsable de su muerte](#), Prensa Libre, 23.01.2021.

⁸ García, O., [Capturan a agentes de la PNC que abusaron de mujer que les pidió auxilio según el MP](#), Prensa Libre, 07.01.21.

⁹ Boche, E., [Firman convenio para la creación de Ciudad Mujer](#), El Periódico, 12.01.2021.

¹⁰ Arana, L., [Entrega de oficina contra la violencia de la mujer a Gendri Reyes genera críticas](#), La Hora, 11.01.2021.

¹¹ Chumil, K., [Justicia responde mal y tarde a la violencia contra la mujer](#), Prensa Libre, 26.01.2021.

¹² Redacción EFE, [Caravana migrante: Guatemala le pide a Honduras que detenga la salida masiva de su población](#), Prensa Libre, 16.01.2021.

¹³ Sapalú, L., [PNC mantiene patrullaje en frontera con Honduras por la caravana migrante](#), El Periódico, 14.01.21.

¹⁴ Vera, A., [Guatemala detiene y reprime con violencia a la Caravana Migrante hondureña](#), El Mundo, 17.01.20.

Guatemalan migrants victims of a massacre in Tamaulipas, Mexico

A new massacre of migrants took place in Tamaulipas, Mexico on January 22. The bodies of nineteen migrants, 14 of whom were Guatemalan nationals, were found shot and burned. Following investigations, 12 Mexican police officers have been arrested and "accused of aggravated homicide, abuse of authority and false reporting. Also, an unspecified number of agents of the Mexican Migration Institute were removed from their posts, due to suspicions of their possible complicity".¹⁵

In a communiqué, the Jesuit Network for Migrants in Central and North America, recalled that there have been other massacres in this same region which have yet to be investigated.¹⁶

Guatemala, one of the most corrupt countries in the world according to the Corruption Perception Index

According to the latest Corruption Perception Index (CPI), prepared by Transparency International (TI) in its evaluation of 180 countries, Guatemala ranks among the fifth worst countries in the region. This is the worst score obtained by Guatemala since corruption began to be measured in 1996. Over the last 10 years, Guatemala has fallen 58 positions, from 91st to 149th place. Globally, Guatemala is below the average of the worst rated region, Sub-Saharan Africa, and shares its position with Cameroon, Iran, Lebanon, Madagascar and Nigeria, countries which can be characterized by collapsed economies and authoritarian governments, according to Manfredo Marroquín, of Acción Ciudadana. Marroquín stated that, "the greater the corruption, the greater the migration, inequality and poverty." Political scientist Renzo Rosal considers that Guatemala is in "a dramatic position with an unviable State." Both analysts identify the MP, the OJ and the Comptroller General's Office as the entities which could develop mechanisms to fight corruption.¹⁷

In addition, this index also highlights how the countries with the poorest citizen perception of corruption are the ones which have demonstrated the worst response to Covid-19, with weak and chaotic measures which have left more room for illegal practices. For Delia Ferreira, president of TI, the vicious circle between corruption and the pandemic is evident: "Covid-19 is not only a health and economic crisis, it is a crisis of corruption and one that we currently do not know how to manage."¹⁸

¹⁵ Cuevas, D., [Masacre en Tamaulipas: identifican a más guatemaltecos entre las víctimas y la cifra sube a 14](#), Prensas Libre, 06.02.21.

¹⁶ Red Jesuita con Migrantes de Centroamérica y Norteamérica, [Una nueva masacre enluta a la población migrante guatemalteca](#).

¹⁷ Vásquez, E., [Guatemala rompe su récord de corrupción](#), El Periódico, 28.01.2021.

¹⁸ García, M., [Guatemala continúa entre los cinco países más corruptos en América](#), La Hora, 28.01.2021.

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.¹⁹

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

As part of our accompaniment to the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)**, in addition to the regular communications we maintain with them, we accompanied them to a hearing of testimonies preceding the presentation of evidence in the Hogar Seguro Case at the 4th Criminal Sentencing Court on January 11. The hearing was adjourned due to the failure of some parties to attend. In addition, the parties present requested the judge to hold separate hearings to hear the testimonies of 7 of the 15 surviving girls, taking into account the best interests of the girls so as to avoid their possible revictimization.



We continue to monitor the security situation of the the **Association of Neighbors of Chicoyogüito de Alta Verapaz (AVECHAV)**, who still have received no news about the criminal proceedings in the Creompaz case. They are awaiting the reactivation of hearings, a necessary step in continuing to advance their demand for justice and historical memory.

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND

There is no news regarding the **Community Council of the Highlands (CCDA) - Las Verapaces Region**. We continue to monitor the situation of Lesbia Artola Peyul and Imelda Teyul closely, as they continue to face serious security incidents. We also continue to maintain communication with the criminalized and imprisoned defenders Jorge Coc and Marcelino Xol, as well as with their families.

As with previous months we maintained telephone contact as well as a number of virtual meetings with members of the **Union of Peasant Organizations (UVOC)**, whose security situation remains delicate. We continue to monitor the progress of the investigations into the murder of Aberlado Quej, perpetrated last December 6, and the disappearance of Carlos Enrique Coy, whose whereabouts are unknown as of August 3, 2020.

Our concern regarding the security situation of the residents of the community of La Primavera (San Cristobal, Alta Verapaz) increased, as of January 11, when several people from this community were assaulted. Those affected shared with us that logging companies intend to build roads to facilitate their access to the area, crossing community lands without prior consultation with the inhabitants. In addition, this situation has caused inter-and intra-community conflicts.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

With regard to the **New Day Chorti Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCND)** we continue to be especially concerned about the delicate situation faced by community leaders Héctor Ovidio Vázquez and Pedro Esquivel, from the communities of Lelá Chancó and Lelá Obraje, both located in the municipality of Camotán (Chiquimula). This month we maintained daily contact with them, and provided telephone support during their meetings with municipal and national authorities. We also continued to monitor the situation of Agustín Ramírez and Timoteo Súchite, criminalized members of CCCND, who have been imprisoned since 2013.

¹⁹ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

On the 18th of this month, we accompanied the Olopa Resistance, who are demanding the right to free, prior and informed consultation regarding the activities of the Cantera Los Manantiales mine, during a press conference and the public hearing at the Supreme Court of Justice (CSJ) for the constitutional action of protection against the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM), where they demanded the definitive cancellation of the mining license.



On January 28 we followed up on the arson attack against the community forest in Lela Obraje, which borders the Cantera El Porvenir mine.

As in previous months, we maintained regular telephone contact with members of the **Peaceful Resistance, La Puya**. This month they attended the public hearing on January 18 in support of the communities and Resistances of Olopa in the injunction against the MEM.



With regard to the **Peaceful Resistance, Cahabón**, we continue to monitor the situation of its members, to pay close attention to the situation of criminalized defender Bernardo Caal Xol.

We have maintained constant contact with **TZ’KAT - Network of Ancestral Healers from Community Feminism** whose members continue to experience threats and defamations, as well as sexist aggressions for their work providing physical, psychological and spiritual accompaniment.

We continue to monitor the security situation of the members of **Chinautla Multisector** in the defense of their environment, which is threatened by the actions of sand extraction companies.

With regard to our accompaniment of **Retalhuleu Community Council (CCR)** on January 14 we met with four of their members who have been experiencing criminalization since 2018 for their work denouncing the adverse impacts produced by sugar mills in the region. We traveled to the department to accompany them to the hearing scheduled for January 15, however, this was suspended and rescheduled for March 18.



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.

In our dialogue with the diplomatic corps and international organizations present in Guatemala, we met virtually with Vanessa Álvarez, Officer from the Observation Unit of the **United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)**.

In our dialogue with Guatemalan authorities, we met in person with:

- Ignacio Arreaga Cifuentes, **Governor of Retalhuleu**.
- Nancy Evanury Galindo Gramajo, **Head of the PDH Auxiliary office in Retalhuleu**.
- Marivel Hernández, **Chief of Services of the PNC in Retalhuleu**.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA

The **6th ACÉRCATE** program was broadcast on our Facebook page on January 20, during which we spoke with Feliciano Macario, from the National Coordinator of Widows of Guatemala (CONAVIGUA), to talk about the closure of the Peace institutions and what this means for the organizations of victims and survivors of the internal armed conflict. [You can find it on 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 project's European Representative attended a multilateral meeting within the framework of the activities of the **Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN)** with: Peter van de Velde, Chair of the Latin America and Caribbean Working Group (COLAC) and Sylwia Domisiewicz, Chair of the Human Rights Working Group (COHOM), of which both groups are from the **Council of the European Union**; Blanca Ausejo from the Human Rights Unit G1 of the **European External Action Service (EEAS)**; and Guillermo Gil Santos, Assistant to the President of COLAC.

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.



COMUNICADO DE PRENSA

REPUDIAMOS LA VIOLENCIA CONTRA LAS NIÑAS DE GUATEMALA

Es obligación del Estado proteger la vida y garantizar el acceso a los derechos fundamentales de su población; sin embargo, en Guatemala prevalece la exclusión de algunos sectores vulnerables, entre los que destacamos a las niñas, quienes en los últimos días han sido parte de los titulares de prensa por acciones violentas en su contra.

Las cifras de la situación de las niñas en el territorio nacional causan preocupación. El país encabeza estadísticas de desnutrición infantil, donde uno de cada dos niños y niñas se ven afectados, y se posiciona en los primeros lugares con la tasa de fecundidad más altas en adolescentes (de 15 a 19 años) de América Latina y el Caribe.

Estadísticas del Observatorio en Salud Sexual y Reproductiva (OSAR) estiman que entre enero y el 9 de diciembre de 2020, 99 mil 656 adolescentes de 10 a 19 años empezaron un embarazo. Cuatro mil 535 (menores de 14 años) a consecuencia de una violación.

El Observatorio de las Mujeres del Ministerio Público (MP) registró 7 mil 840 denuncias por violación sexual contra mujeres en 2020. Cinco de cada diez fueron niñas o adolescentes. En el caso de los femicidios y muertes violentas, el mismo portal estadístico reportó 455 casos el año pasado, una de cada diez no tenía más de 18 años.

Denunciamos la falta de voluntad política de los funcionarios para generar condiciones para la implementación, seguimiento y fortalecimiento de políticas públicas que aborden de forma estratégica la violencia sexual y los femicidios contra niñas y adolescentes. Mientras que las autoridades, siguen sin ver el tema como una urgencia nacional, esto evidencia su poco interés, debilitando la institucionalidad de las mujeres.

Exigimos que crímenes como el de Hillary Sarai, de Escuintla, no se repitan. El acceso a la justicia es fundamental para generar un cambio social, pero el accionar de los operadores de justicia es cuestionable en casos como el del Chelsiry, que fue clausurado provisionalmente porque el MP no cumplió con la debida diligencia.

Demandamos el cumplimiento de la debida diligencia, el acceso a la justicia para las niñas y adolescentes y la implementación de políticas públicas que protejan a las niñas y les permitan acceder a sus derechos fundamentales.

Las niñas no se tocan, no se violan y no se matan
#NosFaltaHillary #NiUnaMenos

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**GUATEMALA PROJECT
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