



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.

Threats against Miguel Ángel Gálvez, judge of the Diario Militar Case, intensifies

The High Risk Court B, presided over by Judge Miguel Ángel Gálvez, indicted retired military and police officers Marco Antonio González Taracena, Víctor Augusto Vásquez Echeverría, Gustavo Adolfo Oliva Blanco, Juan Francisco Cifuentes Cano, José Daniel Monterroso Villagrán, Enrique Cifuentes de la Cruz, Rone René Lara and Edgar Corado Samayoa, on May 6. The men are accused of illegal detention, torture, forced disappearance, homicide and sexual violence of at least 195 people. Most of the victims, "registered in the military intelligence document called Diario Militar, also known as the "Death Squad Dossier", were political, union and student leaders." "¹ Further to this the judge indicted Toribio Acevedo Ramírez on May 23. Ramírez had been detained at Panama airport under an international arrest warrant two weeks previously. He will be investigated for crimes against humanity, forced disappearance, murder and attempted murder.²

The crimes pursued by the Public Prosecutor's Office (MP) in the *Diario Militar* case occurred almost 40 years ago, during the 1983-1986 military government of General Óscar Mejía Víctores, in the midst of the internal armed conflict. A military-police structure coordinated kidnappings, disappearances, assassinations and other acts of terror against people they classified as "internal enemies." According to the MP, at least 15 of the victims registered in the *Diario Militar* were murdered and their bodies abandoned in public spaces with the intention of sowing terror among the population. The MP has evidence that another 131 were victims of forced disappearance.³

The reaction to the judge's ruling has been an increase in threats and intimidating messages against him. He is also being subject to criminalization and prosecution, with a number of legal actions against him, such as the four requests for the withdrawal of preliminary proceedings. The Foundation Against Terrorism filed another request with the MP for a criminal complaint against the judge, accusing him of prevarication and abuse of authority.⁴

In view of this harassment and persecution, within a context in which many other justice operators have been unjustly imprisoned, or forced into exile, Judge Gálvez stated that Guatemala is going through difficult times, and that the situation is worrying because they are attacking, not only the integrity of a judge, but also judicial independence.⁵

The Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH), Jordán Rodas, expressed his solidarity with Gálvez regarding the threats and intimidations he has received. Rodas also highlighted the fact that Gálvez benefits from precautionary measures granted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), which must be updated. He also pointed out that judges and magistrates are independent and should not be subject to intimidation and threats.⁶

¹ Burt, J.M. y Estada, P., [Nueve acusados a la puerta del juicio de diario militar](#), Agencia Ocote. 04.05.22.

² Alvarez, N., [Caso Diario Militar: Juez liga a proceso a Toribio Acevedo](#), Emisoras Unidas, 02.05.2022.

³ Burt, J.M. y Estada, P., Op. Cit.

⁴ Canel, O., [Juez Gálvez se convierte en el nuevo objetivo: le presentan recursos](#), La Hora Gt, 02.06.2022.

⁵ Pérez, R., [Juez Gálvez recibe amenazas por resolución en Diario Militar: "Atentan contra la independencia judicial"](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 9.05.2022.

⁶ PDH, [PDH realiza visita a Juez ante actitudes intimidatorias y amenazantes después de fallo por el caso Diario Militar](#), 09.05.2022.

Similarly, the Guatemalan Association of Judges for Integrity (AGJI) condemned the attacks and threats against the Gálvez, clarifying that these represent a direct attack against judicial independence, as provided for in Article 203 of the Constitution, and Article 27 of the Judicial Career Law. The attacks put the physical and legal security of an administrator of justice at risk for the fulfillment of his jurisdictional functions.⁷ The MP has not initiated any official investigation, but the Judicial Organism (OJ) has not openly denounced the threats against the judge.

Violence against women and children in Guatemala

A total of 34,300 reports of crimes committed against women and children have been registered so far in 2022, according to official data from the MP. The Public Prosecutor's Office for Children and Adolescents of the MP received 4,592 complaints of crimes against children and adolescents between April 1, 2021 and March 31, 2022. The majority of reports relate to disappearances, abuse and sexual violence. According to the Women's Observatory, 23,483 complaints of violence against women have been recorded in 2022, which is equivalent to 68% of the 34,300 files registered this year by the MP. The remaining 37% relate to reports of abuse of children and adolescents (2,910 cases), crimes of sexual violence (3,179), sexual assaults (1,568) and femicides (198).⁸

Congresswoman Andrea Villagrán highlighted how many of the cases of sexual violence against minors are not processed due to lack of reporting. According to Villagrán's team, "the MP has become the main promoter of impunity, hindering access to justice," as reports relating to crimes with sentences of less than five years in prison can be dismissed in prosecutors' offices.⁹

The Secretariat Against Sexual Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking in Persons (Svet), tasked with counteracting and ending this type of violence and abuse by training agents of change and promoting violence-free environments, held the first Eastern Regional Meeting: Women Agents of Change for the Prevention of Crimes of Violence, Exploitation and Trafficking (VET). This meeting sought to prevent criminal acts and strengthen women's knowledge of Human Rights (HR), with the help of national and international experts.¹⁰

Re-election of Consuelo Porras and USAC elections spark outrage

Numerous organisations have identified the nomination and election process for the current attorney general and head of the Public Prosecutor's office as "flawed."¹¹ The existing attorney general, Consuelo Porras, was reelected for 4 more years on May 16, 2022. Despite the concerns issued by the national and international community, regarding the lack of respect for due process throughout the selection process, as well as the inclusion of Porras in Washington's list of Anti-Democratic and Corrupt Actors (in September 2021), Alejandro Giammattei reappointed Porras based on her "capacity, suitability and honesty."¹²

The re-election of Porras added to the popular discontent over the electoral process for the new rector of the University of San Carlos (USAC), as well as the increase in fuel prices and the food staples. The days following the appointment of the Attorney General and the new rector of the USAC, Walter Mazariegos, were marked by demonstrations from across different sectors of civil society who rejected both appointments and the general co-optation of State agencies, which has reached the only public university in Guatemala, the USAC.¹³ In addition to the massive marches and demonstrations, the student community of the USAC in Guatemala City and in the East (CUNORI), joined the days of protest against the elections for rector -which have been described as fraudulent and corrupt, carrying out peaceful takeovers of some educational facilities.¹⁴

⁷ La Hora, [AGJI respalda a Gálvez y rechaza amenazas por resolución en juicio militar](#), 10.05.2022.

⁸ EFE, [Violencia contra la mujer y la niñez: los delitos más denunciados en Guatemala y estas son las cifras](#), Prensa Libre, 09.05.2022.

⁹ Vasquez, J., [Más de 4,500 delitos contra niñez y adolescencia reportados en un año](#), La Hora, 27.05.2022.

¹⁰ Villagrán, W., [Impulsan liderazgo de mujeres contra delitos](#), *Diario de Centro America*, 19.05.2022.

¹¹ La Hora, [Mujeres marchan en zona 1 contra reelección de Consuelo Porras](#), 21.05. 2022.

¹² DW, [Consuelo Porras es reelegida en Guatemala, pese a sanción de EE. UU.](#), 17. 05. 2022.

¹³ Román, J. & Domínguez, M. [Rector Usac 2022: Estudiantes, docentes y trabajadores universitarios salen a las calles para protestar contra la elección de Walter Mazariegos](#), Prensa Libre. 20. 05. 2022.

¹⁴ Pérez, R., [Estudiantes toman la USAC de manera indefinida en rechazo al fraude](#), Prensa Comunitaria, 19.05. 2022. [el Periódico. Estudiantes de CUNORI se unen a protesta y toman edificio](#), 21.05. 2022.

OHCHR Report 2021 points out strong deterioration of human rights in Guatemala¹⁵

According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and its report on the situation of human rights in Guatemala, there has been an accelerated deterioration in judicial independence, repression of minority groups, governance and increased poverty due to the pandemic over the last year. The report, which corresponds to 2021, and was published in the last week of May 2022, indicates that the issue of greatest concern is the increase in attacks on human rights defenders, territorial and environmental defenders and journalists. According to the OHCHR representative in Guatemala, Mika Kanervavuori, there is evidence of an alarming pattern of criminalization with in a context of corruption and co-optation of institutions and justice, in addition to persecution and intimidation.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, indicated that the challenges facing Guatemala in the area of human rights are serious and need to be addressed urgently, for which the upcoming appointment of the Human Rights Ombudsman (PDH) will be key.

2. ACCOMPANIMENTS¹⁶

*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.*¹⁷

THE FIGHT AGAINST IMPUNITY

We accompanied the **Human Rights Law Firm (BDH)** to a hearing in the Hogar Seguro case on May 13, which was suspended and rescheduled for September. We also accompanied them to the first statement hearings for Toribio Acevedo Ramírez (see context) in the Diario Militar case, in which the BDH represents the Association of Relatives of the Detained and Disappeared of Guatemala (FAMDEGUA), plaintiffs in the process. We also visited their offices.

As part of our accompaniment of the **Residents' Association of Chicoyogüito Alta Verapaz (AVECHAV)**, we observed a peaceful march organized by AVECHAV and the Campesino Committee of the Altiplano (CCDA) in Cobán on May 11. The reason for the march was to reject the violent evictions, criminalization processes and human rights violations faced by human rights defenders in the region. They also specifically protested against the criminalization of 21 members of AVECHAV.



Regarding the **Nunca Pares** collective, we accompanied members of the organization to a unilateral hearing for one of the rape cases. The judge in the case ordered the arrest of the accused, which was executed the following week.

¹⁵ Cuevas, D. & Barreno, R. *Informe de Oacnudh señala graves violaciones a los Derechos Humanos*. Prensa Libre. 20.05. 2022.

¹⁶ We maintained regular contact with accompanied organizations who are not specifically mentioned in this section, but there are no activities to highlight.

¹⁷ See our website for general information on organizations and individuals we accompany: <https://pbi-guatemala.org/en/groups-and-individuals-currently-accompanied-pbi>

THE ISSUE OF ACCESS TO LAND



In relation to the accompaniment of the **Community Council of the Highlands - Las Verapaces Region (CCDA)**, as well as observing the aforementioned march organized with AVECHAV, we met with the coordinators of the organization, Lesbia Artola and Imelda Teyul, to discuss the situation of the violent evictions perpetrated in Alta and Baja Verapaz. We also paid two visits to Jorge Coc Coc and Marcelino Xol Cucul, criminalized and imprisoned members of the organization, in Coban prison.

We accompanied the lawyer from the **Union of Peasant Organizations in Verapaz (UVOC)** to a summons at the Tukurú Public Prosecutor's Office. We also accompanied him and several members of the organization to a community during the visit made by the MP to make a visual inspection and take statements. In the context of this visit to the region, we took the opportunity to meet with the coordinator of the organization, Carlos Morales, to discuss the security situation of the organization and the violent evictions in Alta and Baja Verapaz.

We also attended the hearings of two criminalized members of the organization, David Alejandro Maxena and Justino Xollim, and visited David in prison in Coban.

DEFENSE OF THE TERRITORY

We accompanied members of the **'New Day' Ch'orti' Campesino Central Coordinator (CCCND)**, to the Jocotán Public Prosecutor's Office to give statements and follow up on complaints. We also held a meeting with a leader of the organization to update us on the security situation of the communities who are members of the organization and their leaders.

We maintained regular contact with members of the **Peaceful Resistance, Cahabón** and continued to monitor the situation of Bernardo Caal Xol, a criminalized Q'eqchi' Mayan defender and leader.

We provided telephone accompaniment to several members of the **Tzk'at - Network of Ancestral Healers from Community Feminism** in the framework of their activities.

Regarding **the communities of Olopa and Quezaltepeque**, we met with one of their leaders during his visit to Guatemala City. She updated us on the situation of the criminalized indigenous authorities and on the security situation of the organization and the people and communities who are members.

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, this month we met with:

- Rafael Chaves Beardo, Minister Counselor for Human Rights at the **Spanish Embassy**.
- Mateo Barney, Head of the Political Affairs Section, and Monica Izaguirre, Political Officer at the **Canadian Embassy**.
- Carolien van Embden, Human Rights Officer at the **Dutch Embassy**.
- Thomas Wülfing, Counselor and Deputy Head of Mission at the **German Embassy**.
- Hans Magnusson, Swedish Ambassador, Aron Lindhom, Second Secretary and Louise Lindwall Ek, Political and Commercial Affairs Officer at the **Swedish Embassy**.

At departmental level we met with the following authorities and institutions:

- Sergio Pinelo from the Presidential Commission for Peace and Human Rights (**COPADEH**) in Cobán.
- Ofelia Serna, Secretary Officer of the National Civil Police (**PNC**) in Alta Verapaz.

4. OTHER ACTIVITIES OF PBI GUATEMALA



We carried out a **tour of various communities in Cahabón to show the documentary *La Sangre de la Tierra*** (2020, Director: Félix Zurita), produced by PBI Spain and Entrepueblos and filmed in that territory with members of the Peaceful Resistance, Cahabón in April 2019. This tour was planned for 2020 but with the onset of the pandemic we were forced to suspend it. The tour took place from April 30 to May 8 and we visited the following communities during the tour: Rumpoc, Chajbelén, Las Tres Cruces, Setzacpec, Gualibaj, Sepoc, Sepos, La Cresta, Sesaltul and San Cristobal Sactá. The documentary, which deals with stories of resistance to hydroelectric projects in Mexico, Honduras and Guatemala, was seen by some 2,000 people.

We organized a **Healing Encounter** for AVECHAV's women defenders in Coban on May 19 and 20.

We held a **security workshop** with members of the Council of Communities of Retalhuleu on May 23 and 24. The objective of the workshop was to develop digital security skills and deepen knowledge of the rights of defenders and the legal system.

We observed the presentation and delivery to Congress of **the Biodiversity and Ancestral Knowledge Law initiative** on May 31. Hundreds of indigenous authorities, community leaders and representatives of social organizations were present.



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 met with:

- Tomás Reyes, Chair of the Working Group on Latin America and the Caribbean COLAC of the **European Council**.
- Karolien Kras, Guatemala Desk at the **European External Action Service (EEAS)**.

She also participated in a workshop on "the fight against environmental crime in developing countries", organized by the Development **Committee of the European Parliament**.

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.



28 de mayo, Día Internacional de Acción a Favor de la Salud de las Mujeres

El 28 de mayo de 1987 fue instituido el Día Internacional de Acción por la Salud de las Mujeres a propuesta de la Red por la Salud de las Mujeres Latinoamericana y del Caribe, reunida en San José, Costa Rica.

En Guatemala el acceso a la salud sexual y reproductiva ha sido insuficiente y desigual, claro ejemplo son las altas tasas de mortalidad materna, de acuerdo con los datos preliminares del Ministerio de Salud Pública y Asistencia Social (MSPAS) obtenidos a través de la Unidad de Acceso a la Información Pública y el Observatorio en Salud Sexual y Reproductiva (OSAR), en 2021 se registraron 446 muertes maternas. De esas, 154 fueron por COVID-19.

La hemorragia pasó a ser la segunda causa de fallecimientos. La cartera registró 142 casos de muertes por esta causa.

Los departamentos con más muertes maternas son: Huehuetenango, Alta Verapaz, San Marcos, El Quiché y Totonicapán que ocupan la mayor tasa, y reinciden en esta problemática, siendo las mujeres indígenas las más afectadas por falta de acceso al servicio de salud para atender emergencias, además del desabastecimiento de medicamento y equipo.

Según el Observatorio de las Mujeres del Ministerio Público (MP) guatemalteco, en el 2021 se registraron 9,686 violaciones sexuales, de éstas 4 de cada 10 corresponden a niñas y adolescentes.

Por otro lado, en el año en curso se ha registrado 30,131 embarazos en adolescentes entre 15 y 19 años, de estas 508 son de niñas entre 10 y 14 años, recordamos que estos embarazos se consideran como delito de violación según el artículo 173 del Código Penal y son evidencia de violencia sexual, es preocupante que en Guatemala niñas de 10 años mueran por causa de embarazos y maternidades forzadas.

Unas de las mayores limitantes de las mujeres Trans residentes en Guatemala, es el acceso a una salud digna y adecuada, a pesar de que, en la Estrategia de Salud, refiere a la Constitución Política de la República de Guatemala, en sus Artículos del 93 al 95 y 98, elevando la salud a derecho fundamental del ser humano, el cual debe garantizarse sin discriminación alguna. Así como el Código de Salud, Artículo del 01 al 06, promoviendo que los servicios deben brindarse con respeto a la persona, dignidad humana e intimidad.



PBI team in Guatemala: Karen Katherine Vinasco Jiménez (Colombia), Marianne van de Vorle (Netherlands), Lina Alejandra Manriquez (Colombia), Marisol Robles Ruelas (Mexico), Madison Taggart (United States of America), Claudia Vecchia (Italia), Cristina Ortega (Spain), Janeth Alejandra Martinez (Colombia).

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

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