

HONDURAS

Honduras' President-Elect Plans to Confront Violence, Poverty, and Impunity

President-elect Xiomara Castro will take office on January 27. Castro won the presidency with 51.12 percent of the votes, defeating Tegucigalpa mayor Nasry Asfura, presidential candidate of the National Party. As Daniel Langmeier points out in his comprehensive monthly [report](#), the vote is historic on several fronts, reflecting one of the highest percentages of voter participation ever (68.5 percent), as well as the largest number of votes for any presidential candidate. Furthermore, Castro is Honduras' first female president. National Party candidate Asfura received 37 percent of the vote. In her [acceptance speech](#), Castro said, "We are going to build a new era. Out with the death squads, out with corruption, drug trafficking and organized crime. No more poverty and misery." Castro, whose election as a left-wing leader breaks twelve years of National Party rule, is married to Manuel Zelaya, who ruled the country from 2006 until 2009, when he was ousted by a coup.

LIBRE has 50 seats in Congress, rather than the 65 needed to be in the majority, but has preliminary agreements to vote in block with the Partido Salvador Honduras and the Liberal Party to [reach](#) a simple majority.¹ The makeup of Congress is especially important because this Congress will elect Honduras' next Attorney General, as well as new Supreme Court judges. The National Party won the vast majority of the mayoral races (144 compared to LIBRE's 52 and the Liberal Party's 89), but LIBRE won Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, Honduras' two largest cities.

President-elect Castro and LIBRE officials have [indicated](#) interest in repealing the law authorizing Employment and Economic Development Zones ([ZEDES](#)) and revisiting legislation passed under Juan Orlando Hernandez' administration, including recent changes to the penal code that reduce sentences for money laundering. President-elect Castro also has [announced plans](#) to create a UN-backed anti-corruption mission. Castro did not attend the inauguration of Daniel Ortega in Nicaragua on January 10, though outgoing president Juan Orlando Hernández did attend, along with the presidents of Venezuela and Cuba, as well as representatives of Iran, China, and Russia. [According](#) to the attendance list for Xiomara's inauguration, which will take place on January 27, neither Ortega, nor Maduro nor Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canal representatives will attend, but Gabriel Boric, of Chile, and Kamala Harris, among others, will attend.

The period during the elections was largely peaceful, but in its aftermath two former mayoral candidates were murdered: César Cálix Zelaya, former mayoral candidate of the

¹Congressional election results: 50 seats to LIBRE; 44 National Party; 22 Liberal Party; 12 Partido Salvador Honduras; 1 Christian Democrat, 1 Anti-Corruption Party.

Democratic Liberation Party of Honduras (LIDEHR) in Olanchito, Yoro, was shot dead in an ambush on December 11; and Erick Esterbrook Valladares, former LIBRE mayoral candidate in Brus Laguna, Gracias a Dios, was shot to death by men who fired on him from a vehicle. His nephew, who was with him, was seriously injured. In the pre-electoral period, starting in December 2020 and running up to election day (November 28), [more than 20 politicians](#) were murdered.

In the days immediately before, during, and after the general elections in Honduras, 30 [attacks](#) on journalists were reported, according to C-Libre. Carlos Antonio López, for example, was [beaten](#) by two individuals wearing ski masks as he left the premises of Radio Lepaterique, in Lepaterique, Francisco Morazán, after having made comments on air that the National Party was using the government's Vida Mejor program to pressure for votes.

Lenca Indigenous Leader Assassinated Lenca Indigenous leader Pablo Isabel Hernández, a member of the Network of Human Rights Defenders and director of the community radio station Radio Tenán, was murdered on January 9, reportedly ambushed by several assailants, as he was on his way from his house to church in the community of Tierra Colorada, San Marcos de Caiquín, Lempira. Preliminary investigations indicate that he was shot three times in the back. The 34-year-old defender leaves behind a wife and three small children. Through his radio station, known as The Indigenous Lenca Voice, he denounced human rights violations and aired the radio program Voices Against Forgetting. He was active in training programs provided by the human rights organization COFADEH and participated as a human rights observer in the November 28 elections in the municipality of San Marcos de Caiquín. At various points he had reported death threats and asked for protective measures from the federal protection mechanism, which he received. Hernández [was](#) mayor of the Auxiliary of La Vara Alta de Caiquín, coordinator of the ecclesial base communities and president of the Network of Agroecologists of the Cacique Lempira Señor de Las Montañas Biosphere. Congressman Gregory Meeks, Chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, in a tweet [urged](#) the Honduran government to carry out a swift and thorough investigation and take steps to increase protection for human rights leaders throughout the country. As the Washington Post [points out](#), he was the second Lenca Indigenous leader killed in less than a year. The [US embassy](#) and Congressman Jesus (Chuy) [García](#) issued statements of concern. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras called the murder of the defender and journalist [extremely grave](#) and noted that in 2021, ten human rights defenders were murdered. The OHCHR offered the Honduran government technical assistance in identifying and implementing structural and sustainable measures to protect journalists and human rights defenders and prevent attacks.

Trans Rights Leader Thalía Rodríguez Assassinated in Tegucigalpa On January 10, trans rights leader Thalía Rodríguez was [shot](#) in the head multiple times in her home in Tegucigalpa and killed. The man with her was injured but not killed by the gunfire. Rodríguez, who owned a small grocery store, had been advocating for trans rights for many years. Her murder marks the first killing of a member of the LGBTQ+ community in Honduras in 2022. Counting her killing, 402 members of the LGBTQ+ community have been murdered in Honduras since the 2009 coup, an average of more than 30 a year. The US embassy [called for](#) an immediate and thorough investigation.

Defenders in Choluteca Threatened On December 2, [Nidia Castillo](#), a lawyer with the Network of Female Defender Lawyers, discovered that her car, which had been parked outside her house, was dented in various places and a large rock had been placed on the motor. A similar attack on her car happened in 2017. As she left the house with her damaged car, accompanied by a family member, a man on a motorcycle followed her. Earlier in the day she had been at a press conference where the Employment and Economic Development Zones (ZEDEs) were denounced. On December 5, [German Chirinos](#), technical secretary of the Social Environmentalist Movement of the South (MASSVIDA), was approached while driving home by an unknown man who [threatened](#) to kill him. On arriving home, he discovered various dents in his vehicle that seemed to have been made by blows from an object. Both defenders were working with C-Libre's citizen observation effort during the elections, including the organization's Freedom of Expression Observation Mission. Melisa Hernández Quintanilla, a journalist in Choluteca, reported that the nuts on three of her car's tires were loosened on November 28 and two days later her car was broken into.

Communities Forced from Land Met with Gunfire on Return; Seven Injured

The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras [called on](#) the Honduran government to cease forced evictions and to deal with the structural causes of land conflicts after private security forces fired on campesinos returning to land they had been evicted from a week earlier. On December 27, campesinos from the El Remolino cooperative in the Bajo Aguan region in the department of Colón were attacked by private security forces hired by Inversiones Ceibeña, according to a [communiqué](#) from the Plataforma Agraria. The community apparently has title to the land and in returning were asserting their right to it.

On December 16, the OHCHR had expressed concern about evictions scheduled in the Bajo Aguan from December 16 through December 21. The scheduled evictions, the OHCHR pointed out in a [tweet](#), were linked to [reforms](#) to the penal code that went into effect on November 1, broadening the crime of "usurpation," or land-grabbing, and permitting immediate evictions with no judicial oversight. The UN warned that the evictions scheduled for December "could create a grave precedent and could aggravate the situation of conflict related to access to land, particularly for campesino groups." In addition to the Remolino eviction, other evictions of communities from land in the Bajo Aguan were carried out in December, as well. On December 16, the cooperative of San Isidro was evicted, on the basis of an eviction order issued in 2019. The cooperative of San Isidro, affiliated with the Plataforma Agraria, has a definitive land title for the San Isidro farm and has been on the land for two years. The [Dinant Corporation](#) claims ownership of the land and has planted it with African palm trees. The cooperative had removed small sections of Dinant's palm plantings to plant yucca, maize, beans, plantains, and other subsistence crops.

Trial of Guapinol Water Defenders Resumes On January 13, the [trial](#) of the eight defenders of the Guapinol River resumed, after a December holiday break. The defense [presented evidence](#) that the environmental license to operate the Los Pinares mine in Tocoa, Colón was granted illegally and the Honduran Congress made arbitrary changes to the Carlos Escaleras National Park to benefit Lenir Perez's mining operation. The [defenders](#) of the river, who have now been arbitrarily detained for more than two years, were legitimately protesting against the mining

operation when they were criminalized by the Honduran Public Ministry as an act of repression against peaceful protest so that the mine could move forward unopposed.

The trial is being [live streamed](#). The European Union embassy in Honduras, together with the Spanish, French, and German embassies, [tweeted](#) that they would be following the trial and asked that due process be respected and that trial be transparent and publicized in accordance with international human rights norms. The US State Department and embassy in December also has expressed support for a fair trial; Under Secretary Uzra Zeya in December [tweeted](#) that during her visit to Honduras she “underscored the importance of transparently and expeditiously resolving legal processes, including Guapinol” The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Honduras in a series of tweets [expressed concern](#) about the “unjustified pretrial detention” of the defenders and called for their immediate release. Representative Jan Schakowsky [tweeted](#) in December, “The #Guapinol River defenders have been arbitrarily detained in Honduras for more than two years & are now being subjected to a sham trial. I join the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detentions in calling for their immediate release!”

The defenders suffered a setback on December 9, when a new charge against them was admitted by the court, in spite of arguments by the defense that the trial was not in the correct phase for additional charges to be filed. The defense requested the recusal of the tribunal, but this request [was denied](#). The crimes the defenders stand [accused](#) of are arbitrary detention and aggravated arson, stemming from an incident in September 2018, when Los Pinares attempted to use its private security guards to forcibly evict a protest camp set up by community members. On that day, as EarthRights International explains in its [summary](#) of the case, security guards shot a young man from the community in front of dozens of witnesses. The company alleges that during the course of the eviction, a truck belonging to the security company’s manager and company containers were set on fire. In response to the shooting, the community held the director of the security company until the police arrived. The men accused voluntarily handed themselves to judicial authorities to contest the criminal charges against them. The new charge is “aggravated damages” allegedly suffered by Inversiones Los Pinares. The three other charges are aggravated arson against the Los Pinares security guard director; unjust detention of the security guard director; and aggravated arson with damage to Inversiones Los Pinares. The UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention found “there is no basis to justify the trial” against the accused defenders. “In addition to the fact that there is no justification for advancing the trial, the defenders have been prosecuted by a court that has not responded to the frequent requests for appeal and habeas corpus filed by the defense,” a statement from the UN [notes](#). A [habeas corpus](#) filed in December is the latest one to be ignored.

In the context of the trial, a campaign of [intimidation and threats](#) on social networks has intensified, especially on Facebook and Twitter, along with harassment and surveillance. On December 1, unknown individuals went to the "Justice and Freedom for Guapinol" camp, installed outside the Tocoa Palace of Justice, and took videos and photographs of the families of the eight defenders and people who are accompanying them through the trial.

Since Early 2020, Food Insecurity in Honduras Has Nearly Doubled Eggs, yeast, bread, milk products, and some basic grains have [risen in price](#) significantly in recent months. According to the World Food Program’s office in Tegucigalpa, food insecurity in Honduras had

[almost doubled](#) by mid-October 2021, rising from 1.8 million food insecure people in early 2020—prior to the Covid-19 pandemic and hurricanes Eta and Iota—to 3.3 million food insecure people. The WFP office pointed out that food insecurity, which affects 3.3 million of the 9.5 million Hondurans, could “increase to 4.4 million by the end of 2021.”

Deportation Statistics Show an Increase in Migration from Honduras in 2021

From January to November, 2021, 52,968 Hondurans were deported as they tried to make their way to the United States, a 44.8 percent increase over the number deported in 2020. Deportations from Mexico accounted for 84.5 percent of the total number of cases, while deportations from the US accounted for 19.9 percent, [according](#) to the Spanish news agency EFE. Of the total number of deportees, 45,050 were adults—38,045 men and 7,005 women. Minors returned in all of 2021 totaled 7,918, representing 15 percent of the total.

Protocol for the Investigation of Threats Against Human Rights Defenders Created

The Center for Justice and International Law (CEJIL) has created a protocol for the effective investigation of threats against human rights defenders. The protocol, known as the [Esperanza Protocol](#), is aimed at supporting the development of national, regional, and international policies that guarantee the right to defend rights by incorporating effective measures for the investigation and prosecution of threats to defenders. “Oftentimes,” according to CEJIL, “State action is primarily or exclusively focused on physical security protection measures, such as bodyguards or emergency mobile phones. While this is important, they do not address the factors that generate risk; the emotional, psychological, social, and financial impacts on the targets and their families; the collective dimensions of these risks and their impacts; and the need for adequate measures of prevention and rehabilitation that address diverse individual and collective needs. Accountability for perpetrators and rehabilitation for victims is rarely prioritized.”

For more information on PBI’s work in Honduras, see PBI Honduras’ website, [here](#), and [follow](#) the Honduras team on Twitter.

GUATEMALA

On Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of Peace Accords, Rights Ombudsman Issues Warning

On December 29, Guatemala marked the 25th anniversary of the signing of peace accords that ended the country’s brutal 36-year internal armed conflict. The army during the conflict carried out at least 626 massacres and wiped 440 Mayan villages off the map. Guatemala’s asymmetric war against a small guerrilla force included acts of genocide against the indigenous Mayan population, [according](#) to the Historical Clarification Report. In 2013 a Guatemalan court confirmed this finding, [ruling](#) that former Guatemalan general Efraín Ríos Montt was [responsible](#) for genocide when the army he commanded killed 1,771 Ixil Mayans, wiping out 5.5 percent of the Ixil Maya population in 17 months. The war claimed an estimated 200,000 victims. More than 70,000 people were forcibly disappeared, and more than a million were forced to seek refuge outside of Guatemala. Successive Guatemalan administrations have failed to comply with the terms of the Peace Accords; the implementation rate of the Indigenous Accord, as former UN Special Rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, Victoria Tauli-Corpuz, has [pointed out](#), stands at 19 percent.

President Alejandro Giammattei, who has [publicly disdained](#) the [Accords](#), did not attend the anniversary ceremony held in the Guatemalan Congress. The Supreme Court president, Justice Silvia Patricia Valdés Quezada, also abstained.

The US government's foreign policy objectives during the years of the war [included](#) "combating the communist insurgency," as well as pushing for a peace agreement in the 1990s. The US embassy refrained from making a public statement on the anniversary of the Accords. The embassy of the European Union did [tweet](#) in acknowledgement of the anniversary and in support of "the well-being of Guatemala and its people." The Spanish embassy in a [statement](#) noted that, while the Accords provided a roadmap to address structural inequalities and recognize the identity and rights of the Indigenous people, issues such as corruption and organized crime, respect for human rights, poverty and malnutrition, and strengthening of institutions "continue to require attention."

Guatemala's Human Rights Ombudsman, Jorge Rodas Andrade, issued a [stark warning](#), writing that "democracy and social peace are under serious threat in Guatemala. . . . With the government of Giammattei, a serious regression of 25 years is being completed. The Constitution has been repeatedly violated without consequences for those responsible; the checks and balances of the Republic have been annulled and corruption and impunity are back in force. The institutional framework of peace has been dismantled, and human rights violations in the last two years have no precedent since the signing of the Peace Accords. In addition, internationally, the country has turned its back on multilateral commitments and is being excluded from the fellowship of democratic nations. The enormous influence of networks of corruption and structures of organized crime in decisions of the State seriously threatens democracy and social peace. Hate speech, incited or tolerated from above, and attacks on and harassment of judicial workers and independent journalists may herald the imposition of an arbitrary and repressive regime that will once again leave Guatemalan families in mourning, also forcing new displacement. At this critical hour, it is imperative that various democratic sectors . . . open spaces of dialogue and cooperation and generate capacities of defense of the Constitution and of the Peace Accords, impeding authoritarian forces from imposing themselves."

Criminalization, Along With Percentage of Women Defenders Murdered, Increases

According to the Unit for the Protection of Guatemalan Defenders (UDEFEFUGA), which released its [preliminary tally of attacks](#) on human rights defenders, 2021 was "marked by a series of phenomena that point to the consolidation of an authoritarian state. The three branches of government have been aligned for a sole purpose, the procurement of impunity in favor of the powerful elite. The common denominator of the administration of Alejandro Giammattei has been to broaden the interests of national and international capital, deepen corruption, use repression against those opposed to the imposition of this regime, and guarantee impunity in favor of those who lead the consolidation of this authoritarian state. This strategy . . . has as its backdrop at least three elements," UDEFEGUA stated: "the institutional capture of the three branches of the government; the dismantling of the institutional framework of peace and human rights; and violence against all who are considered the political opposition." UDEFEGUA highlighted the cooptation of the Public Ministry, which "has abandoned its work of investigating the acts of violence and aggression against people, communities, and organizations that defend rights, and whose work currently revolves around obtaining impunity for those who

attack, as well as the criminalization of defenders.”

UDEFEGUA received reports of 846 attacks on human rights defenders from January 2021 to November 2021. UDEFEGUA documented 11 murders of human rights defenders, along with 3 attempted murders and 5 acts of torture and cruel, inhumane, and degrading treatment. A total of 406 cases of criminalization were documented, including 84 baseless lawsuits against human rights defenders and 56 cases of illegal detention. The total number of cases of criminalization in 2020, by comparison, was 313. The climate of institutional capture and the broadening of impunity, according to UDEFEGUA, led to 210 attacks on judicial workers. “Judges and prosecutors in the Public Ministry,” the communique points out, “have suffered from a climate of harassment, baseless lawsuits, surveillance, spurious penal and administration persecution, acts of defamation, and even some today suffer exile.” UDEFEGUA documented 136 attacks on those defending the right to justice; 130 attacks on journalists; and 153 attacks on defenders of land and environmental rights.

As was the case in 2020, women defenders constituted a larger percentage of the defenders murdered than in prior years; 27 percent of the defenders murdered in 2021 were female, and in 2020, 28.6 percent of the defenders murdered were female. Both years mark a departure from prior patterns, when women defenders constituted 11 or 12 percent of the defenders killed. In the [press conference](#) at which it presented its report, UDEFEGUA urged the Guatemalan government to implement a [public policy of protection](#) for human rights defenders and asked the international community to continue efforts to accompany human rights defenders in their day-to-day work in order to recover the path of democracy and the agenda of peace.

Esteemed Judge Erika Aifán Faces Loss of Immunity, Trial on Spurious Charges

On January 13, Guatemala’s Attorney General Consuelo Porras in a [press release](#) announced the filing of a formal request to lift the immunity of High-Risk Court Judge Erika Aifán, stating that she may have abused her position and failed to fulfill her duties. More than 200 religious and human rights leaders in Guatemala immediately [supported](#) Aifán (and were [vilified](#) on social media as communists and traitors), as did [international organizations](#) and the US Department of State, which last year [awarded](#) Aifán a Women of Courage Award. The State Department in a press release [called](#) the effort to lift Aifán’s immunity “a blatant effort to obstruct investigations into corruption and an affront to the integrity of Guatemala’s highest courts. The independence of judges to review cases and issue rulings free from the threat of reprisal or outside influence is foundational to the rule of law. This action against an internationally recognized independent judge weakens a vital pillar of Guatemala’s democracy and judicial system.”

Three Members of LGBTQ+ Community Killed in Three-Day Span On December 30, trans woman Barbara Weimaran was killed in El Jicaro, El Progreso, [according](#) to the Human Rights Ombudsman’s Office, and on January 2, 2022, Joseline Calito was shot to death in Amatitlán, Guatemala, and a gay man was stabbed to death in the department of Santa Rosa. The Ombudsman called on the Guatemalan government to create a protection policy for LGBTQ+ people and called on the Public Ministry to fully investigate and prosecute the murders. In 2020, 33 members of the LGBTQ+ community were murdered, [according](#) to the LGBTQ rights organization Lambda. Only in one of those cases have trial proceedings begun.

Indigenous Rights Leader Arrested in Chiquimula on Accusations from Mining Company Maya Ch'orti' Indigenous ancestral authority Felipe Díaz Ramos [was arrested](#) on January 9, 2022, and accused of illegal detention. He is a defender of Indigenous and land and environmental rights, threatened in Olopa, Chiquimula by the Cantera Los Manantiales antimony [mining project](#). Five other ancestral authorities were arrested on September 30 in connection with [events](#) in July 2019.

Mining Resumes in El Estor; Rushed Consultation Excluded Indigenous Authorities

The Fenix nickel mine in El Estor, Izabal, is [operating](#) again, after Guatemala's Ministry of Energy and Mines reported an end to the consultation process [mandated](#) by the Constitutional Court in 2019. The court had ordered the suspension of operations until the indigenous people affected by the mine were consulted, as required by Convention 169 of the International Labor Organization. According to the ministry, the consultation was completed in early December and accords were reached for development projects for the affected communities. The Maya Q'echi' Ancestral Authorities, however, were excluded from the consultation, as was the Artesanal Fisherman's Guild, which had filed the court case that prompted the ruling to suspend the mine. The "consultation" was carried out while basic constitutional rights, such as freedom of assembly and movement, were [suspended](#) and thousands of soldiers and police were patrolling the communities and targeting Indigenous leaders with warrantless arrests, violent house raids, and surveillance. According to Robin Macloni, of the Q'eqchi' Ombudsman's Office in El Estor, the will of the mining company was imposed rather than the rights of the indigenous communities which have been violated since 2005, when the mining company began operations without consultation." Attorney Juan Castro, of the Indigenous Peoples Law Firm, has [pointed out](#) that the way in which the pre-consultation and consultation process was carried out is illegitimate. "The dialogue was carried out between institutions and pseudo-representatives of indigenous communities who do not reflect the feelings of the Q'eqchi' communities. It was not an open dialogue nor held in good faith because it was carried out within the framework of the suspension of human rights and constitutional guarantees," Castro noted.

Deaths from Acute Malnutrition Double In 2020, 56 children under the age of five [died of acute malnutrition](#), according to official figures from the Guatemalan government. Most were between one and two years old, and the others between six and twelve months. The majority of the children who died of malnutrition lived in the department of Alta Verapaz, while the other children who died of malnutrition in 2021 lived in the departments of Huehuetenango, Guatemala, and Jutiapa. In 2020, by comparison, 26 children died of malnutrition. Guatemala has one of the worst child malnutrition rates in the world; [47 percent](#) of Guatemala's children are stunted from malnutrition. In rural departments where the large majority of inhabitants are indigenous, that rate reaches 70 percent. (For background on malnutrition and its relation to land ownership, see PBI Guatemala's [report](#).)

Migration from Guatemala Increased in 2021 Irregular migration of Guatemalans to the United States [increased](#) in 2021, in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic; more than 57,000 Guatemalan migrants were returned to Guatemala from the United States and Mexico. In early

December, the US began re-implementing the Migrant Protection Protocol, also known as Remain in Mexico, requiring asylum applicants to wait in Mexico while their asylum claims are processed. The protocol first began to be implemented in El Paso, Texas— asylum seekers are sent to Ciudad Juarez to wait—and the protocol began to be implemented in San Diego on January 3. The plan is to expand the protocol to other border cities, including Brownsville, Texas, and Tucson, Arizona. Human Rights First documented more than 1,500 [violent attacks](#) on asylum seekers in the program — assaults, kidnappings, rapes and even murders — during the program’s initial two years. The US government is continuing to expel many migrants, including Mexican minors, under the Title 42 public health order. (For recommendations on US policy to address the root causes of migration, see PBI’s 2020 [analysis](#)).

Survivors of Mass Rape Seek Justice as Civil Patrollers Stand Trial Five former members of the Civil Defense Patrol that operated in the area of Rabinal, Baja Verapaz, during the internal armed conflict are now standing trial for the rapes of 36 Mayan Achi women between 1981 and 1985. The former patrollers are being charged with crimes against humanity, in addition to the sexual violence, because the rapes were used as a weapon of war. [Civil Defense Patrols](#) were civilian groups forced by the Guatemalan army to take up arms and patrol their villages in an effort to wrest popular support from the guerrillas. Army officers at Military Zone 21 and at the Salamá military base were in authority over the civil patrollers accused of rape, according to witnesses. For [more information](#) on the [case](#), see Jo-Marie Burt’s International Justice Monitor [here](#) and follow the trial live [here](#).

For more information on Guatemala and PBI’s work, see PBI Guatemala’s [website](#).

[Peace Brigades International](#) is a nongovernmental organization dedicated to nonviolence. PBI sends teams of international observers to areas of conflict and repression to provide protective accompaniment to human rights defenders whose lives and work are under threat. Founded in 1981, PBI has worked in fourteen countries and on four continents. PBI has consultative status before the UN, and PBI’s international office in Brussels and advocacy staff around the world support efforts in the field to open space for peace and the defense of human rights.