

PBI's 20th anniversary conference

Promoting nonviolence and protecting human rights: third party initiatives in conflict areas

TWO hundred and fifty participants, 30 speakers, facilitators and interpreters and 60 more volunteers from over 30 countries gathered in Konstanz on the border of Switzerland and Germany on 26/27 October. Presentations on the first day addressed the achievements and challenges of displaced communities; human rights defenders and grass roots organisations; the PBI approach to nonviolence and protecting human rights; and the reconstruction of civil society in conflict areas and promotion of peace and nonviolence. Workshops the following day enabled the participants to explore these themes in more depth.

Excerpts from presentations by speakers

Claudette Werleigh, Life and Peace Institute, Sweden, former Prime Minister of Haiti



'I think that as civilian third parties we should always remember that we are not the main actors. The actors are the people in conflict. Unless they themselves build peace, there will be no peace. We should be humble enough to always understand that...we can only act as facilitators, and be open to listening, understanding and facilitating a process.'

Johan Galtung, Norway, Professor of Peace Studies

'I would like to start by wishing the birthday child Peace Brigades International my warmest regards and compliments for the future and for the past. I think the future will be even greater because of the excellent preparatory work that has been done and I would like to try to put that into a context of what I call Globalising Human Rights.'



Ernest Pierre, Haiti, Group of Trainers for Peace (GFP)



'During their five years in Haiti, [1994- 1999] PBI helped to create a space in society ...to develop capacities for positive conflict management to discuss nonviolence, mediation, consensus, conflict analysis, negotiation, and conflict resolution. The beneficiaries included human and women's rights practitioners, people from the countryside, and the staff of national

and international NGOs... The GFP [a network of Haiti nonviolence trainers who emerged from PBI training for trainers workshops] is becoming a reference point for questions about conflict resolution workshops and is providing resource people to other organisations.'

Francis Deng, Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Internally Displaced People

'..Let me end by reiterating my great admiration for the work of PBI, which I consider exemplary of the inclusiveness of promoting protection and assistance for the needy civilian populations. I applaud your excellent work.'

Alirio Uribe Muñoz, Colombia, Professor of Human Rights, Member of the Group of Lawyers 'Jose Alvear Restrepo', Vice President of the International Federation of Human Rights Organisations (FIDH)

'In my opinion, they [PBI] have succeeded in accompanying organisations and peace communities in Urabá, six highly representative organisations in Bogotá, two large organisations in Magdalena Medio which have many affiliations, and organisations in Medellín. This has resulted in PBI having an impact and a presence in national and local space which are involved in human rights work. [The result of the presence has been] to deter direct and severe attacks on organisations and people, giving them security to carry out their work, to enable initiatives of peace communities to be preserved, thereby protecting their social networks, and to raise awareness among the authorities, diplomatic corps and United Nations and abroad.'



Photos: Kersten Enning

Further information including speeches of the panellists, workshop reports, participant list in English, French and Spanish:

www.peacebrigades.org/conference

For a copy of the 28 minute video of excerpts from the conference contact: PBI Switzerland on pbich@bluewin.ch