

# STRATEGY 2024 - 2029

## PROTECTING HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS: ENSURING PEACE AND JUSTICE

### About Peace Brigades International

Peace Brigades International (PBI) is an international non-governmental human rights organisation, recognised by the United Nations with ECOSOC-status, and founded in 1981. PBI operates based on the principles of non-violence, non-interference and non-partisanship. PBI offers protective accompaniment to human rights defenders at risk and currently has field projects in 7 countries around the world: Colombia, Nicaragua, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Mexico and Nepal as well as 14 supporting country groups.



### Our work in the Netherlands

We are part of the global PBI network. PBI Netherlands contributes to the protective accompaniment of human rights defenders worldwide by:



PBI Netherlands also hosts Shelter City Utrecht. Shelter City is a global movement hosted by Justice & Peace. It provides temporary relocation for human rights defenders at risk. In a period of three months, human rights defenders stay in the Netherlands to re-energize, expand their network, receive training and mental health support. With this initiative, PBI Netherlands contributes to the protection of human rights defenders at home and abroad.

# Why it matters

Globally, human rights defenders face widespread obstacles, threats and attacks, as civic space continues to shrink. Civic freedoms are under attack in a growing number of countries. Over the last years, we have faced numerous violent conflicts, a global health crisis, climate change impacts, and the erosion of democratic institutions and the rule of law. These developments all affect the space for human rights defenders to defend and protect human rights<sup>1</sup>.

Among the most targeted groups are those defending land and environmental rights, freedom of expression, women's rights and access to justice. In particular, women and LGBTQ+ defenders frequently face death threats and physical violence, alongside gender-based violence and risks<sup>2</sup>.

Closer to home, the Netherlands and Europe are witnessing rising political and cultural polarisation, and the proliferation of right-wing conservative governments that prioritise national interests over international solidarity. In the Netherlands we see a decline in safety for journalists and increased pressures on the right to protest<sup>3</sup>.

## What we work on

**Our vision** - PBI envisions a world in which people address conflicts non-violently, where human rights are universally upheld and social justice and intercultural respect have become a reality.

### Mission: making space for peace

Human rights defenders around the world are experiencing growing pressures and restrictions on their work. We use a strategy of international presence and protective accompaniment that supports local initiatives and contributes to developing a culture of peace and justice. We act on the request of local non-violent groups working for human rights based social change.

**We believe that lasting transformation of conflicts cannot come from the outside, but from within and that it should be based on the capacities and desires of local people.**

PBI draws political and diplomatic attention to the plight of human rights defenders at risk in over twenty countries and sets up teams of international volunteers to accompany and protect them. We firmly believe that sustainable conflict resolution cannot be imposed from the outside. It should be based on the needs and beliefs of local populations. The efforts of PBI expand the political space for human rights defenders and provide them with moral support, so that they can continue to work in relative safety in favour of human rights and justice in their own countries.



# 401

human rights defenders were **killed** in 2022<sup>4</sup>.



In **118 countries and territories** civil society is under severe attack<sup>5</sup>.



# 1500

**registered threats** to human rights defenders<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.undp.org/library/dfs-secondary-impacts-covid-19-closing-civic-space-fragile-contexts>

<https://publications.iom.int/books/world-migration-report-2022>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.wilpf.org/publications/threats-and-challenges-faced-by-women-human-rights-defenders/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://rsf.org/en/2023-world-press-freedom-index-journalism-threatened-fake-content-industry>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.frontlinedefenders.org/en/resource-publication/global-analysis-2022>

<sup>5</sup> [https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings\\_2023/](https://monitor.civicus.org/globalfindings_2023/)

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## What we will do

In the upcoming strategic period, PBI Netherlands will build on its 40 years of experience in creating space for peace and respect for human rights. While we have provided protection to human rights defenders across the world for over four decades, our work occurs in ever changing situations and contexts.

A **key lesson** is that success depends on adjusting to what works best in changing circumstances and contexts. Facing manifold global challenges, a small yet ambitious NGO as PBI wants to set clear priorities.



**Human rights defenders are agents of positive change and development. They are the backbone of peaceful societies. By protecting them, we strive to ensure peace and justice.**

Francis Meijners,  
chair of the board 2024

## Priority areas

Among the most targeted groups of human rights defenders are those defending land and environmental rights, freedom of expression, LGBTQ+ rights, women's rights and access to justice.

Human rights defenders working in these fields frequently request accompaniment from PBI field projects and volunteers or temporary relocation through the Shelter City programme.

As a compact organisation we focus on groups that face the greatest risks. Therefore, we have identified three strategic priority areas that guide our efforts in protection, awareness raising, and advocacy:



# Our goals for 2024-2029

## Get in touch:

Together we can make a difference. If you'd like to know more about our work or how you can contribute, please get in touch.

[info@peacebrigades.nl](mailto:info@peacebrigades.nl)  
[@PBINederland](https://www.instagram.com/PBINederland)

Our mission and priorities lead to four strategic goals.

## Strengthen the protection of Human Rights Defenders



In the Netherlands, we will continue growing our base of volunteers to provide accompaniment in PBI field projects. We will focus on recruiting and providing training to candidates. We aim to grow our capacity to organise temporary safe spaces in the Netherlands for international human rights defenders, including by increased attention to mental health support.

## Strengthening protective networks



Working in partnership is central to our approach to deliver on our strategic priorities. Solidarity networks and policymakers play a key role in guaranteeing the protection of human rights. We will strengthen our existing and new partnerships with other civil society organisations and knowledge institutions. Our advocacy tours with human rights defenders are key to increase visibility and shape policy-making in the Netherlands.

## Raise awareness in the Netherlands



Raising awareness among the Dutch public about the work of human rights defenders and the challenges they face is critical for PBI. Advocating for the protection of human rights defenders and speaking out against the threats they suffer; citizens can help generate public support in the Netherlands and pressure the government to act.

## Deliver impact through an effective organisation



To deliver on our strategic priorities, PBI Netherlands aims to continuously improve its organisational performance. To achieve this, we will focus on the diversification and increase of our funding from Dutch donors and strengthen our organisational structure. We will also engage in innovative ways of working, such as hybrid activities to enhance collaboration and visibility of human rights defenders abroad.