



June 2012 Human Rights Accompaniment Training

*with the Honduras Accompaniment Project /
Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras (PROAH)*

Purpose:

The Honduras Accompaniment Project (*Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras – PROAH*) was established to accompany the Honduran people, particularly human rights defenders, in their historic, non-violent, struggle to transform their society, with the following objectives:

- to offer international accompaniment to human rights defenders, including communities, human rights organizations, and members of social movements working for systemic change in an environment of repression, political persecution and personal risk, in the interest of dissuading violence
- to bear witness to and support the documentation of events and human rights abuses
- to offer consistent and accurate information to the international community and communicate with international partners regarding emergency response needs on the ground in Honduras

History:

In the days immediately following the June 28, 2009 coup d'état in Honduras, Friendship Office staff traveled to Tegucigalpa at the request of Honduran social movement leaders to provide emergency accompaniment and help to assess needs. In the first weeks of the coup, they worked with partners in the Hemispheric Social Alliance to organize *International Missions of Accompaniment* to provide a seamless international presence and set up a mechanism for daily communication with the National Coalition against the Coup to coordinate efforts and disseminate information in the midst of a total news blackout.

Then, during a two day gap in July 2009 with no International Mission in the country, a bomb exploded in the STIBYS union office used for meetings and a movement leader was violently murdered. The National Coalition against the Coup called with an urgent request to establish a program for permanent accompaniment. In response, the Honduras Accompaniment Project was initiated with a two-person team permanently based in Honduras. Various human rights accompaniment and observation delegations have been organized with participation of groups and individuals from the US and Canada to increase the international presence and help to disseminate important information. In September of 2011 the project established a permanent office in Tegucigalpa with a small international, long-term team that responds to requests across the country to accompany specific human rights defenders (individuals, organizations, and communities).

Current Work:

The project is engaged in ongoing conversations with partners in Honduras regarding accompaniment needs, continuing to develop the model and expand the accompaniment team in order to respond more fully to those needs. The project is also in communication with other international accompaniment organizations working in the region regarding their accompaniment models, collaboration around training for accompaniers, risk analysis and security procedures. The project maintains contact with international solidarity organizations in the US, Canada, and Europe, as well as certain embassies and international organizations with representation in Honduras regarding the security situation of human rights defenders the project accompanies in Honduras.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT THIS TRAINING:

This BTS-PROAH training has been developed in large part based on extensive human rights accompaniment experience in Guatemala, as well as the experience of other accompaniment projects in Latin America. This model of human rights accompaniment is one tool used in the face of harassment, delegitimization campaigns, threats, and attacks against human rights defenders in Central America. It has been modified to better respond to the specific conditions of accompaniment work with PROAH in Honduras, but this is a work in progress. The most essential elements of this pre-departure training are those that focus on the theory and conditions of accompaniment work in a Central American context, however, in

terms of the learning environment of the training, you should be aware that the majority of the participants may be pursuing accompaniment work in Guatemala. Please carefully consider your capacity and interest in self-directed learning when assessing your suitability for volunteering as a PROAH accompanier in Honduras. PROAH will provide you with resources and contacts to supplement BTS training materials, but you will need to be an active participant in directing your training experience and preparing yourself to accompany in Honduras.

PLEASE NOTE: PROAH accepts applications on an ongoing basis from individuals who have been previously trained for human rights accompaniment in the recent past and fulfill the rest of the requirements mentioned above and in the attached PDF. Previously-trained volunteers who are accepted would not be required to participate in the June training in Canada, but would still have to participate in a week long in-country orientation. In-country orientations are scheduled to take place approximately every 6 weeks in Tegucigalpa. Contact Jenny Atlee at jennya@friendshipamericas.org for upcoming orientation dates.

What support will you receive in Honduras?

A detailed in-country orientation is carried out by PROAH in Tegucigalpa once you arrive in Honduras. The in-country project coordinators have the final decision regarding selection of candidates following the in-country orientation. Following the orientation and an invitation to accompany with the project, you will be assigned to the accompaniment team based in Tegucigalpa or possibly to extended regional assignments, and when possible, accompaniment assignments will be done in pairs. Other team members will not necessarily be from your country of origin or speak English. Spanish is the common language of the project. While you are volunteering with the project, shared lodging will be provided in the same house where the accompaniment offices are located in Tegucigalpa, though you will need to provide your own food and there is a kitchen available for your use.

The project is in the process of exploring extended placement of accompaniers in specific regions of the country, in which case accompaniers would lodge with community members and conditions may vary. In all accompaniment situations, you will be in regular contact with a PROAH coordinator in Tegucigalpa. Should there be a crisis international Urgent Action Networks and relevant embassy contacts will be alerted immediately.

How much will this cost?

The cost while accompanying will depend somewhat on your individual situation and the cases you are accompanying at the time, how much travel is required, etc. It is recommended that you budget \$300 US/month to cover transportation and food costs while accompanying as well as unexpected expenses you could incur. PROAH also requires all accompaniers to purchase emergency medical insurance for the duration of their time as an accompanier.

Where will you get this money?

Accompaniers are asked to raise their own support, as PROAH has limited capacity to support accompaniers financially at this time. You can ask a solidarity committee, peace, student, church, or community group to sponsor you or help you with fundraising. If you do not have such a committee in your vicinity, you can organize your own support group to help with fundraising. We're happy to help make connections and suggest fundraising ideas. If you are concerned about accompaniment costs being an impediment to your participation with the project, please let us know. *PROAH has limited funds available to cover in-country costs of accompaniers who are able to make a long-term commitment to the project (preferably for one year).*

How can you participate?

Request an application form from **Jenny Atlee** at jennya@friendshipamericas.org. Once your application is received, if you are selected for an interview, Jenny will arrange for you to speak with one or more Friendship Office representatives (by phone or in person if possible) in order to determine whether you will participate in the accompaniment training. Jenny will then notify you of the recommendation of the interviewers.

For more information:

Friendship Office website: <http://friendshipamericas.org/>

PROAH blog in Spanish: <http://proah.wordpress.com/>

English version of the blog: <http://hondurasaccompanimentproject.wordpress.com/>