



January 2012 Human Rights Accompaniment Training with the Honduras Accompaniment Project / *Proyecto de Acompañamiento internacional en Honduras (PROAH)*

Overview of PROAH:

To accompany the Honduran people, specifically human rights defenders, in their historic, non-violent, struggle to transform their society by:

- providing international accompaniment for human rights defenders, communities and social movement leaders working for systemic change in an environment of repression, political persecution and personal risk in the interest of dissuading violence;
- bearing witness to and supporting the documentation of events and human rights abuses;
- providing consistent and accurate information to the international community;
- communicating with international partners regarding emergency response needs on the ground in Honduras.

History:

In the days immediately following the June 29, 2009 coup d'état in Honduras, Friendship Office Staff (formerly with the Quixote Center) travelled 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, we worked with partners in the Hemispheric Social Alliance to organize *International Missions of Accompaniment, Solidarity and Witness* to provide a seamless international presence and set up a mechanism for daily communication with the National Coalition against the Coup (prior to establishment of the National Front of Popular Resistance - FRNP) to coordinate efforts and disseminate information in a context of human rights violations, repression and a total news blackout.

Then, during a two day gap in July with no International Mission in the country, a bomb exploded in a prominent union office used for meetings and a movement leader was violently murdered. Partners in Honduras called with an urgent request to establish a program for permanent accompaniment.

In response, we initiated the Honduras Accompaniment Project with a two-person team permanently based in Honduras. We sponsor US/Canadian Human Rights Accompaniment Delegations to increase the international presence and help to get information out. We place short-term accompaniers to accompany specific individuals/organizations who request and require it and helped to facilitate emergency evacuations when requested.

Current Team:

PROAH is currently coordinated by two long-term volunteers in Tegucigalpa in coordination with shorter-term volunteer accompaniers. The coordinators have significant international accompaniment experience in the region. Jenny Atlee, is based Nicaragua as co-director of the Friendship Office and has done accompaniment work for many years in Central America.

We are continuously in conversation with partners in Honduras regarding accompaniment needs and working to develop a model and expanding our team in order to respond more fully to those needs. We are also in communication with other international accompaniment organizations who work in the region regarding accompaniment models, collaboration around training for accompaniers, and risk analysis and

security procedures. The project is in communication with the Honduras Solidarity Network (HSN) in the United States and collaborates with the Emergency Response Network (ERN), a quick-response network that has developed out of the HSN to execute immediate actions by telephone and fax in response to human rights emergencies identified by Honduran partners. We are also in the process of establishing stronger relationships with solidarity groups in Canada and Europe.

Please note: *The NISGUA-PROAH training is based largely on human rights accompaniment experience in Guatemala. 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 the training are those that focus on the theory and conditions of accompaniment work in a Central American context, however, 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. PROAH will provide you with resources and contacts to supplement NISGUA training materials, but you will need to be an active participant in the process of directing your training experience. 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 Honduras.*

What support will you receive in Honduras?

A detailed in-country orientation is carried out by the Honduras Accompaniment Project coordination 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, and 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. You will be in regular contact with the PROAH coordinators in Tegucigalpa. Should there be a crisis international Urgent Action Networks 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, however, please let us know.

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.