

**Business and human rights – towards a decade of global implementation.
UNWG Call for inputs. Written evidence submitted by Peace Brigades
International UK**

Introduction

1.0 PBI UK is an international human rights organisation that provides life-saving support to human rights defenders at risk. PBI currently has teams of international human rights observers in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, Indonesia, Kenya, Nicaragua and Mexico. PBI provides protection and capacity building to local human rights defenders and communities which include peasant farmer and indigenous communities, women's groups, LGBTI+ rights defenders and defenders working on impunity and the rule of law. In addition we also provide longer-term support - from security monitoring and psychological assistance, to communications and capacity-building training. Through the work of country groups such as PBI UK, we build international networks that can be mobilised at short notice to provide support. We provide defenders with platforms they otherwise would not have ensuring that their calls for rights and freedoms are heard by those who can make a difference. PBI has monitored the security situation of human rights defenders for over 35 years and our field presence alongside local defenders allow us an insight into the human rights situation on the ground especially in relation to defenders effected by human rights violations in the context of business.

1.1 PBI UK welcomes the opportunity to share brief summaries of relevant materials as part of the open call for input for the new global project, "Business and human rights: towards a decade of global implementation." This submission provides a short summary of the Human Rights Defenders Toolbox.

The Human Rights Defenders Toolbox

2.0 The Human Rights Defenders Toolbox was launched in June 2018, created by lawyers at Simmons and Simmons as part of a pro bono project in collaboration with Peace Brigades International UK. An innovative new resource for defenders working on issues regarding business and human rights, it was produced by law firm Simmons & Simmons in collaboration with PBI UK. The Toolbox comprises factsheets on specific business and human rights topics. The factsheets are available in both English and Spanish and have been disseminated to human rights defenders worldwide. This is the first centralised online resource for rural communities and lawyers. The full Toolbox can be accessed [here](#).

2.1 The aim of the Toolbox is to assist HRDs in identifying which international human rights instruments from across the international human rights spectrum (UN Guiding Principles and beyond) might apply to their cases, how these instruments interlink and what practical steps can be taken.

2.2 The project seeks to address the fact that, despite the existence of these international principles, gaps in their implementation mean that HRDs confronting corporate interests still face escalating violence. The Toolbox helps to provide them with the resources that might help defenders document, report and expose corporate abuses.

2.3 The fact sheets are organised in three groups and focus on the following topics:

1. The obligations of companies to respect human rights, as set out in the UNGPs (human rights policy statements, human rights due diligence, grievance mechanisms and remediation, use of leverage).
2. The obligations of states to develop policy strategies to protect against adverse human rights impacts by business enterprises in conformity with the UNGPs.

3. Advice for HRDs when confronted with trends in repression (Free Prior and Informed Consent, Private military and security companies, Mass tort claims and parent company liability, Environmental hazards and degradation, Operating in conflict affected areas, International displacement and resettlement of communities).

2.4 The factsheets cover the following topics:

- UNGPs: Human rights policy statements
- UNGPs: Human rights due diligence
- UNGPs: Grievance mechanisms and remediation
- UNGPs: Appropriate action and the use of leverage
- Dealing with defamation allegations
- Environmental hazards and degradation
- Free, prior and informed consent
- Operating in conflict affected areas
- Private military and security companies
- Internal displacement and resettlement of communities
- Mass tort claims and parent company liability
- National action plan for the United Kingdom
- National action plan for the United States of America
- National action plan for Colombia
- Evaluation of national action plans
- Practical application of the factsheets

2.5 Following the launch, dissemination and update of the toolbox, throughout 2020 PBI UK and Simmons and Simmons rolled out a capacity building programme for human rights defenders at risk through a series of webinars connected to the Toolbox.

2.6 The [first webinar](#) was an introduction to the Toolbox. We were joined by international law firm Simmons & Simmons for a live webinar and Q&A session on the 15th June 2020. Chris Owen, a Partner specialising in Business and Human Rights and Victoria Channing, Pro Bono Manager at Simmons & Simmons, along with PBI UK Director Susi Bascon, shared information about the Toolbox. Human Rights Defenders Donald Hernandez and Alirio Uribe gave insights into the practical application of the toolbox in the field. The accompanying powerpoint on the UNGPs can be accessed [here](#).

2.7 The [second webinar](#) in the series was on the themes of policy Statements and Human Rights Due Diligence. The training session focused on the obligations of companies to respect human rights, as set out in the UNGPs.

2.8 The toolbox was also explored in two podcasts: '[Human Rights in Context: Practical toolbox to help ensure companies respect human rights](#)' and '[Human Rights in Context: Finding pro bono lawyers](#)'.

2.9 In terms of impact the Human Rights Defenders Toolbox was nominated for the [2019 Law Society Legal Excellence award for Excellence in Pro Bono](#). The webinar series reached 106 human rights defenders and members of the legal communities from across 17 countries. We continue to roll out the toolbox in the various countries in which we work, and have updated them to match shifting standards of international law. *"The toolbox not only provides practical assistance but it also demonstrates to these HRDs that they are not alone."* - Sir Patrick Elias, President of the Alliance for Lawyers at Risk. A full article on the impact of the project can be found [here](#).