

Nonpartisanship, interventionism and legality in accompaniment: comparative analyses of Peace Brigades International, Christian Peacemaker Teams, and the International Solidarity Movement

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International non-governmental organisations deploy international observers as unarmed bodyguards to promote human rights and protect local citizens threatened by political violence. The political dynamics associated with three prominent organisation's whose fieldwork extensively utilises the accompaniment tactic are comparatively examined along three lines of inquiry: their respective degrees of nonpartisanship, interventionism, and engagement in illegal activities through the practice of civil disobedience. How do the real or perceived partisanship, interventionism and respect for local law of an accompaniment organisation impact the actions of those citizens and state forces that it is trying to deter from violating human rights? How do they impact the supporters of the accompaniment organisation as they lobby host governments? An argument is made that those local activists who are provided with international accompaniment are likely better served through nonpartisanship, i.e. the accompanier's lack of involvement in the work of local activists, and through more moderate forms of interventionism, including adherence to local laws.

Keywords: accompaniment; civilian peacekeeping; empowerment; human rights; non-partisanship; non-violence; peacebuilding; solidarity

Introduction

There are many tactics and techniques with which to attempt to open up political space and secure human freedoms within the context of protracted conflicts and high levels of political violence. Amnesty International began to organise letter-writing campaigns to governments on behalf of political prisoners in the 1960s. Those letters were in effect a concrete political expression, as well as a symbol, of the conscience of the international community with regard to human rights promotion and protection. Beginning in the early 1980s, the practice of international non-violent protective accompaniment took this idea a significant step further. Beyond merely sending letters, human rights organisations also have engaged in a plethora of tactics to promote human rights and protect local activists.¹ In the early 1980s, they also began to send international volunteers to physically accompany local activists under threat from their own governments or from para-state organisations. The bodily presence of these internationals was not just a more powerful symbol; it was also a more concrete and unassailable political expression of the international community's concern for the promotion and protection of human rights in a local situation.

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International non-violent protective accompaniment rests on the idea that the presence of unarmed international escorts accompanying local activists may be a deterrent since political violence and the violation of human rights directed toward foreign nationals or even committed in their presence often result in higher political costs than the same actions directed at unaccompanied local citizens. An entire body of scholarship has emerged documenting and interpreting international non-violent protective accompaniment practices, also sometimes known as civilian peacekeeping.²

From the early years in the broader field of conflict resolution to the present, the ethics of various degrees and varieties of partisanship and interventionism on the part of third parties have been robustly debated, especially as relates to issues of empowerment.³ In the more specific arena of international accompaniment to promote and protect human rights, although the degrees of partisanship and interventionism of the companions has been much discussed,⁴ there is certainly no consensus about what are the most effective or even most appropriate approaches in the field. What has been much less addressed is the manifold ways that partisanship and interventionism issues intersect in highly dynamic ways with concerns over direct action and the related issues associated with companions engaging in the illegal activities usually associated with non-violent civil disobedience.

This article comparatively analyses the complicated dynamics associated with three prominent international accompaniment organisation's field practices regarding degrees of non-partisanship and degrees of interventionism, including engaging in illegal activities through the practice of civil disobedience. It seeks to shed some light on the following questions: How does the real or perceived partisanship, interventionism and respect for local law of an international accompaniment organisation impact the actions of those citizens and state forces that it is trying to deter from engaging in human rights violations? How do those same factors impact the supporters of the accompaniment organisation as they lobby host governments on behalf of the accompaniment group?

Mahony and Eguren suggest that 'demonstrable objective and external criteria' define and drive non-partisanship.⁵ While this may be true in some ways and in certain contexts, in others it is simply not enough to overcome the significant and hegemonic powers of the state and its influential supporters to define the meaning of such contested concepts as the non-partisanship of international human rights organisations, nor to effectively frame the mainstream public's perceptions of these non-state actors.⁶ For example, state authorities like Guatemalan President Mejia – who perceived Peace Brigades International's accompaniment work as a threat to state power and control – may successfully reframe the groups as joined to and participating in the work of their political opposition, no matter the actual reality on the ground. When that happens, the accompaniment group itself may become the object of state repression, which we shall see occurred not only with Peace Brigades in Guatemala, but also with the other two organisations discussed here: Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Solidarity Movement.

With regard to the cases presented, the organisations profiled are two of the oldest and most prominent practitioners of the technique of international protective accompaniment, i.e., Peace Brigades International (PBI) and Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT), and a newer practitioner, i.e., the International Solidarity Movement (ISM). While there are differences in organisational values, what unites the organisations for the purposes of comparison is the fact that they each rely heavily upon accompaniment as a field tactic. However, these three organisations understand and deploy the accompaniment tactic differently, with greater and lesser degrees of emphases on non-partisanship, on interventionism and on legalism. It is these differences in using the accompaniment

tactic that provide the paper's analytical focus. Prominent and formative incidents from PBI's accompaniment work in Guatemala and Sri Lanka in the 1980s and 1990s will be described and analysed vis-à-vis degrees of non-partisanship, interventionism, and participation in illegal activities through civil disobedience. As Christian Peacemaker Teams and International Solidarity Movement have each worked extensively in Palestine and the Occupied Territories, prominent incidents from their accompaniment work there in the 1990s for CPT and in the 2000s for ISM will also be described and then comparatively analysed.⁷

Guatemala in the 1980s to early 1990s and Sri Lanka in the 1990s were conflict-ridden states ruled authoritatively for vast periods under states of emergency. Political and even social life was marked by the rampant violations of fundamental human rights by the state that are normally associated with authoritarianism and declarations of states of emergency. State terror was no idle threat; imprisonment without trial, disappearances, and extra-judicial killings were commonplace in both countries. While political and social life in Palestine and the Occupied Territories during the periods CPT and ISM have worked there was also marked by massive violations of human rights by the Israeli state, there are nonetheless important distinctions between the situations that should be acknowledged.

First, both Guatemala and Sri Lanka were heavily dependent upon Western developmental, economic and military aid packages that came from a variety of countries. Second, both Guatemala and Sri Lanka had experienced not only the threat but the reality of aid cut-offs as a result of the state's repressive tactics. While Israel is also heavily dependent upon aid, it arrives mainly in the form of military aid primarily from the United States and European countries. Unlike the other two cases, and for idiosyncratic reasons, Israel takes a pro-active response to managing and increasing its impunity and it has been comparatively much less susceptible to aid cut-offs in response to accusations of human rights abuses. That means that the political dynamics governing how international non-violent protective accompaniment functions on the ground in Palestine and the Territories are somewhat different from the other two cases. Put simply, Israel could act with relative greater impunity not only within its own borders than could Guatemala or Sri Lanka, but also within the Occupied Territories.

In what follows, I will profile, in turn, the official statements and the actual work of each accompaniment organisation with regard to degrees of non-partisanship and degrees of interventionism, including local law-breaking through civil disobedience.

Peace Brigades International

At one end of the international accompaniment practice spectrum is Peace Brigades International (PBI). Of the three organisations profiled here, PBI not only has the clearest articulations of policy with regard to issues of non-partisanship and degrees of interventionism in protecting human rights, but the most conservative and restrictive policy.

Founded in 1981, Peace Brigades International was one of the pioneering organisations to develop the tactic of international non-violent protective accompaniment. Defining itself variously as a human rights organisation and a non-violence organisation, PBI has avoided calling itself a 'solidarity' organisation. The organisation defines accompaniment as a non-partisan activity, despite the fact that more often than not PBI provides accompaniment services primarily to only one 'side' in any given conflict. This hard political reality may contribute to why the group assiduously avoids any and all involvement in the work of those whom they accompany. PBI believes that assisting in the actual work of the accompanied will doubtless be perceived as partisan political activity by the repressors and their supporters

who will endeavour to exploit the political advantages that accrue to them as a result of any partisanship by Peace Brigades staffers in the field. The organisation maintains that being perceived as a partisan organisation will compromise its political leverage as an international human rights organisation insofar as that political leverage is rooted at least in part in the organisation's status as 'outsider neutrals'. In addition, and as I will argue below, engaging in partisan activities increases the likelihood not only that accompaniment may fail in its deterrence task, but it allows the aggressor to frame the accompaniment organisation as the problem or the enemy, sometimes even resulting in direct attacks on accompaniment workers.

Finally, PBI also sees its accompaniment work as an exercise in empowerment designed to expand the political spaces available for local peacebuilding. In this view, ultimate responsibility for peacebuilding must remain with the local community. According to the PBI ethos, engaging directly in the work of local organisations would be disempowering, potentially creating dependencies and reducing local capacities, thereby working at cross-purposes to the goals of accompaniment. All of these understandings are reflected in the organisation's most developed statement on the issue.

As an international third-party force PBI acts in an independent and non-partisan manner. According to its Vedchhi Declaration nonpartisanship implies:

- dealing with all parties with an open mind;
- reporting as objectively as possible;
- refraining from judgemental responses;
- voicing concerns to those responsible without being accusative.

Nonpartisanship does not mean indifference, neutrality or passivity towards injustice or towards violation of human rights, personal dignity and individual freedom. On the contrary: PBI is fully committed to these values and struggles against violence – physical or structural – as a means of establishing enduring peace. Therefore the work of PBI, as a non-partisan third-party, requires that PBI teams and their members do not become involved in the work of the groups or the individuals whom they assist or escort; that they try their utmost to remain non-judgemental, despite their possible emotional identification with the oppressed or the victim; that they do not become involved in the official policies of the host country; that they share the tools of conflict resolution they have at their disposal with those who ask for them, whether as information or in the form of workshops and training programmes without intervening with or imposing their own opinions.⁸

Given its strict stance on non-partisanship, it should not be surprising that PBI also eschews participation in non-violent direct action by its volunteers (whether or not non-violent civil disobedience is at play). This is because not only does PBI believe that it violates the non-partisanship principle but because it may transfer the spotlight from the actions of local actors to those of PBI, compromising the organisation's empowerment principles. Moreover, as the cases analysed below will show, Peace Brigades has learned that participation (or even perceived participation) in civil disobedience actions can easily jeopardise the volunteer's and even the organisation's legal status in the host country.

Peace Brigades teams have served in Nicaragua (1983), Guatemala (1983–1999; 2003–present), El Salvador (1987–1992), Sri Lanka (1989–1998), North America (1992–1999), Colombia (1994–present), Haiti (1992–2001), Mexico (1998–present), Indonesia (2000–2010), Nepal (2005–present). Considered collectively, this represents 108 years of team-based experience in 10 different settings.⁹ For example, in 2006 alone

PBI had an average of 65 volunteers from 25 countries working in five settings marked by high levels of political violence. Peace Brigades International has far and away the largest and longest body of work of any accompaniment organisation.

Given its unique historical status, one might expect that PBI would have also accumulated the most instances amongst accompaniment organisations where aggressors had pushed back against the organisation's accompaniment work by attacking PBI clients, or attacking and harassing PBI field workers in various ways, including arresting and deporting them. But in fact there have been remarkably few such instances, particularly from a comparative perspective relative to other organisations also doing international non-violent protective accompaniment work.¹⁰ There are, of course, some exceptions to this pattern and it is these very exceptions that have served to solidify PBI's conservative approach to partisanship, to interventionism and to legality. Given the formative role these events have played for PBI, it is useful to describe and analyse a few of them in detail.

Very early in its development of the tactic of international non-violent protective accompaniment, PBI was faced with one of those ever-present dilemmas associated with negotiating the rocky shoals strung along the shores of non-partisanship. It was dilemmas like this early case that served to harden the organisation's commitment to non-partisanship. Nineth Garcia, who had lost her husband during the civil war in Guatemala, had formed the Mutual Support Group for Relatives of the Disappeared (*Grupo de Apoyo Mutuo*) or 'GAM' in 1984, with the encouragement and support of Peace Brigades activists in Guatemala. The relationship with PBI had to be negotiated and renegotiated over issues of non-partisanship, including from the very beginning:

I think she was expecting us to provide a lawyer and private detectives and go out and start doing something. So I explained what our work and limits were. . . She asked, 'What should we do?' I responded, 'It seems to me that you have done everything possible, legally in this situation. You have to understand that we're guests in this country, and we can't organize Guatemalans. But it is our hope that if any group organized, we might be able to help them. Don't you know other people in this same situation?'¹¹

Nonetheless, despite this careful approach and refusal to become directly involved in GAM's work, from the start the government of Guatemalan President Mejia Victores seemed convinced of PBI's partisanship with regard to the Mutual Support Group. Mejia's ambassador to the US accused PBI of *illegal* participation in the work of the Mutual Support Group in 1985. In November 1985, President Mejia, in a move targeting both PBI and the Mutual Support Group, threatened 10 PBI activists with expulsion for '*illegal* (emphasis added) meddling in internal politics'. Mejia subsequently sent word that he would delay the expulsion if PBI would, 'guarantee that GAM would not disrupt the runoff elections' that were soon to be held.¹² Following its protocols of not interfering in the work of those they accompany, PBI rejected the Guatemalan president's request, and they were temporarily expelled from the country.

Beginning in 1983, PBI experienced six years of what seemed to be effective accompaniment of Guatemalan popular organisations facing high levels of repressive violence from the state and para-state actors. During this time, PBI was accompanying individuals and organisations that were central to the growth of civil society in Guatemala as it began to flower after years of severe and little-challenged repression. However, the year of 1989 brought many changes to PBI's track record of human rights protection in Guatemala.

The office of a group PBI had long accompanied was bombed while PBI volunteers were inside providing accompaniment. In addition, PBI was itself the target of bomb threats, while its own offices were in fact bombed, and PBI volunteers were knifed near

the PBI offices. The best analysis of these events is provided by Mahony and Eguren,¹³ who conclude that these attacks were most likely sanctioned – if not ordered and carried out – by the Guatemalan government’s security apparatus. The Guatemalan government endured intense international political and economic pressures generated in part by the attacks on PBI and those it accompanied; the result was that this pattern of attacks soon ceased as quickly as they had begun.

Although deterrence failed, the failure was only temporary thanks in part to its strong support within the diplomatic community at the time and to the international mobilisation efforts of PBI’s emergency response network which generated many phone calls, faxes and letters on behalf of PBI and the GAM. One of the lessons PBI learned over the decades of doing accompaniment work is the importance of non-partisanship to the diplomatic community. Winnie Romeril, a veteran of multiple PBI teams and a long-time lead trainer for the organisation, reports that when PBI’s non-partisanship has been publicly compromised, embassy staff members have not been shy in telling the organisation that it makes their job of providing an extra layer of protection for the PBI staff much more difficult.¹⁴ PBI’s stringent non-partisanship and its general ban on aggressive physical interventionism was likely a salient factor in being able to mobilise significant amounts of international and diplomatic pressures on the Guatemalan government on behalf of PBI and those it accompanied.¹⁵

On those occasions when PBI teams crossed over the fine line of perceived political non-partisanship or left the group open to being accused of engaging in illegal actions, their accompaniment work was dangerously compromised, as the following two examples demonstrate. One comes from PBI’s Guatemala team while the other comes from the Sri Lanka team. They both have to do with the degrees of perceived non-partisanship and degrees of staying within local laws that an accompaniment organisation must maintain without unduly sacrificing its presumed political influence and its unofficial diplomatic immunity as an established international human rights organisation.

In Guatemala in 1991, poor and landless families ‘invaded’ and occupied land of the private Olga Maria plantation, land they claimed had been stolen from them decades earlier. PBI provided protective accompaniment. Following a few days of high tension arising from police attempts to expel the *campesinos*, on 11 March police shot and killed one of the occupiers – a poor mother with five children. The shooting occurred in the presence of PBI field workers. In addition, in order to accompany the land occupiers, PBI had been on private plantation land, without permission. With a dead activist and five motherless children as evidence, the accompaniment clearly had failed in its deterrence goals. Worse yet, the PBI volunteers were subsequently ordered to appear at the National Palace where they were questioned by the Guatemalan foreign relations minister about their actions at the occupation.

With the notable cooperation of their respective embassies, the three PBI volunteers were given three options: (1) leave the country immediately under the protection of their respective embassies; (2) face prosecution for their involvement in an *illegal* event that resulted in a person’s death; or (3) face imprisonment in Guatemala followed by expulsion from the country.¹⁶ Moreover, the Foreign Ministry also said that if they rejected option (1) and refused to leave, the lives of the entire Peace Brigades team might be in danger and they may be expelled from the country. The other part of the hard bargain being forced on PBI by the government was that it could make no public statements about the event, and would have to cease all work in the region with the land occupiers. These were stiff terms, indeed. In exchange, the government would refrain from mentioning PBI publicly and claimed it would cooperate with regard to PBI’s overall presence in the country.¹⁷

By accompanying land occupiers onto private property and therefore engaging in activities that could easily be construed as illegal, Peace Brigades sacrificed dimensions of its international and diplomatic leverage vis-à-vis the government of the host country. Consequently it put itself and its supporters in the diplomatic community between a rock and a hard place – with nowhere comfortable to turn. It subjected itself to deportations and lost political face through unflattering media reports. Equally important, in the agreement with the government, PBI restricted itself and its international support network with regard to the work it was actually there to be doing: publicising what it had witnessed – the killing of an unarmed activist and mother of five by the Guatemalan national police.¹⁸ A more profound failure of international protective accompaniment is hard to imagine. Yet two short years later, in remarkably similar fashion, the PBI Sri Lanka team also learned a lesson about the relationship between adherence to the letter of the local law and the dynamics of international non-violent protective accompaniment.

In the June of 1993 PBI provided accompaniment for the minority Tamil refugees at Vivekananda Hall refugee camp in Sri Lanka's western capital city of Colombo as they were resisting government attempts to resettle them in the war zone in the east, from which they had fled. At this time, the Sri Lankan government saw refugee resettlement as an integral dimension of its attempts to show the international aid and development communities that the island country had stabilised and was ripe for both the resumption of aid and also business re-investment. However, the Tamil refugees at the Vivekananda camp would not play along with the government script.

With over 100 refugee camp residents engaged in a hunger strike and refusing to be resettled into the eastern conflict zone, PBI volunteers entered the camp on their first day of accompaniment of the refugees, but without the required government permission to enter the camp premises. The next day, with PBI back on the scene at the camp, the buses for moving the refugees pulled up, followed by the police and army to enforce the resettlement. The refugees refused to leave and following a standoff, the buses and the police and military eventually retreated without the refugees. The camp residents were ebullient. They were also convinced that the presence of the internationals had thwarted the resettlement. As their spokesperson said, '[i]f not for the volunteers from Peace Brigades International, who were there with us we would have been compelled to board the buses'.¹⁹ Not all, however, were equally pleased.

The Sri Lankan government and its nationalised police force were clearly not happy with PBI's role in this incident. The police returned later the same day and questioned the Peace Brigades observers about their activities inside the camp the previous day, in a manner that the PBI members found to be both intimidating and threatening.²⁰

Within a few days the event received wide media coverage across the fractured island with well-placed smears of PBI figuring prominently. For example, the government-controlled newspaper noted that the refugees had been 'coerced by sinister forces' that included foreigners who had been seen entering the camp days earlier.²¹ Then, following forceful government pressures, the respective embassies of the various PBI team members called them in one-by-one to tell them that the Sri Lankan government was irate with the Peace Brigades workers for illegally entering the camp. The government claimed it constituted a violation of Sri Lanka's internal affairs. In fact, PBI was warned by the British Embassy that not only were the individual team members in danger of being expelled, but the entire organisation's status on the island was also in peril.

After having its original plan delayed by the refugee's resistance while being accompanied by PBI, the government soon regrouped following its diplomatic and

media offensives against PBI and the refugees. When it became clear that enforced resettlement was going to be attempted again two weeks later, the refugees naturally requested ongoing PBI accompaniment in their continued resistance.

My experience on that PBI team at the time was that it was clearly sobered by its earlier illegal entry into the camp. We were cowed by the resultant government threats of deportation to us individually and to the team; we were also influenced by the warnings from our respective embassies who reinforced the government's message that our 'illegal' entry into the camp had put us on very thin political ice. The team eventually decided not to provide accompaniment at the camp for the re-scheduled resettlement attempt – in part to avoid compromising the ability of PBI to work on the island at all. Predictably, in the absence of international observers, the refugees were violently forced onto the buses, with water hoses being turned on the meager belongings of the more recalcitrant refugees. In the melee, some refugees were injured seriously enough to be hospitalised, and the remainder – many single parent women who had recently lost their husbands to the ethnic conflict – were resettled into the dangerous eastern war zone from which they had earlier fled.

The Vivekananda refugees were clearly disappointed and felt let down by the decision of the Peace Brigades team.²² But it was not only the refugees who now held a more dim view of the human rights organisation and what it could accomplish; PBI's overall credibility with civil society organisations on the island suffered immeasurably.²³

These deleterious outcomes were magnified by the fact that the closing of the Vivekananda refugee camp was just the first in a planned series of impending refugee camp closures and forced resettlements by the government. The residents at these other camps were no more interested in returning to the war zone than the Vivekananda camp residents had been. Anticipating more resistance, the government took effective advantage of PBI's legal indiscretions and actively warned the additional refugees scheduled for resettlement that Vivekananda-style protests and publicity would not be effective.²⁴ The government warnings in the press were hardly necessary. The informal but always lively refugee news grapevine on the island insured that the refugees living at these other camps knew not only of PBI's early success in accompanying the Vivekananda resistance, but also of the team's subsequent unreliability and its failures there. In the end, the other refugees facing impending camp closures and resettlement chose not to resist. Equally notable is the fact that they did not even bother to ask for PBI accompaniment to ensure an orderly and respectful evacuation. The PBI team and others in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) community at the time thought that this was at least in part due to the refugees losing faith in PBI's reliability and consequent effectiveness.

The failures here rival those of the Olga Maria incident in Guatemala and for the same reason: the political emasculation of PBI as a result of having sacrificed its perceived non-partisanship thanks to breaking local laws while engaging in international accompaniment. Due in part to the earlier crossing of a legal Rubicon by the PBI Sri Lanka team, neither human rights nor the range of political choices available to the refugees were increased – which are the goals of all international non-violent protective accompaniment. Rather, PBI's legal indiscretions and the Sri Lankan government's subsequent shrewd exploitation of the same served a contrary function: reducing political space and the range of resistance choices for local activists that offered acceptable political costs.²⁵

Christian Peacemaker Teams

Christian Peacemaker Teams (CPT) was founded in North America in 1986. Animated by the Anabaptist Christian tradition of pacifism and active non-violence, from its beginnings

CPT has been demonstrably more partisan and far more interventionist in its field work than has PBI.

Regarding interventionism and civil disobedience, this is well captured in the catchphrase commonly used within CPT to describe their work: it is about putting their bodies on the line in a religiously-driven expression of the principle of ‘getting in the way’. CPTers endeavour to figuratively and literally ‘get in the way’ of oppression, injustices and violations of human rights. Especially noteworthy is that – following the principles of non-violent civil disobedience which are central to CPT’s identity – this getting in the way is often done irrespective of local laws, particularly when they are considered to be unjust. Their mission statement, issued at the CPT founding conference at Techny, Illinois in December 1986, reflects these interpretations:

CPT provides organizational support to persons committed to faith-based nonviolent alternatives in situations where lethal conflict is an immediate reality or is supported by public policy. CPT seeks to enlist the response of the whole church in conscientious objection to war, and in the development of nonviolent institutions, skills and training for intervention in conflict situations. . . We believe that the mandate to proclaim the Gospel of repentance, salvation and reconciliation includes a strengthened Biblical peace witness. We believe that faithfulness to what Jesus taught and modeled calls us to more active peacemaking. We believe that a renewed commitment to the Gospel of Peace calls us to new forms of public witness *which may include nonviolent direct action* (emphasis added).²⁶

With regard to non-partisanship and the question of assisting in the work of those they accompany, CPT activists become intimately involved in the activities of those they accompany. In many ways, and unlike Peace Brigades, Christian Peacemaker Teams is a ‘solidarity’ organisation. They engage in such solidarity activities as helping to plant crops, assisting in harvests, rebuilding homes destroyed by a repressive state, actively dismantling barricades and blockades deemed to be unwarranted and that violate human rights, helping to organise and also taking part in political protests and demonstrations (including civil disobedience), and living simply in dangerous situations amongst those whom they accompany.

Because CPT insists that they would do the same thing for any non-violent group under threat who requested their presence and assistance, they argue that they are a non-partisan organisation, despite their close involvement in local political work. This is a thin and one-dimensional distinction; it is also one that is not easily recognised by local authorities enmeshed in protracted conflict situations.

CPT has fielded teams in Palestine for many years, beginning in 1993; Haiti (1993–1997); Washington, DC (1994–1996); Bosnia (1996); Chechnya (1996); Richmond, VA (1997–1999); Chiapas, Mexico (1998–2001); South Dakota (1999–2000); Esgehoôpetitj First Nation (Burnt Church, NB) (2000–2002); Vieques, Puerto Rico (2000–2003); Indian Brook, NS (2001); Columbia (2001–present); Oneida, NY (2002–2003); and Asubpeeschoseewagong First Nation (Grassy Narrows, ON) (2002–2005); Africa Great Lakes region (2008–2009); and Iraq (2002–present). Considered collectively, this represents approximately 66+ years of team-based experience in at least 14 different settings.²⁷ CPT likely has more experience in international non-violent protective accompaniment than any other organisation besides Peace Brigades.

Unlike PBI, Christian Peacemakers have frequently been directly singled out and detained by the police. This has especially been the case for the teams that it has fielded in Palestine and the Occupied Territories. It often seems at least partly tied to CPT’s partisanship and its aggressive forms of intervention, as in the following three examples from the mid-1990s:

In 1995, CPT team members used sledgehammers on a locked gate at Hebron University because it was an unjust barrier to students from Hebron. Three team members and one member of the Hebron Solidarity Committee were arrested and spent the night in jail before having bond posted by an Israeli friend. In March of this year, team members Rick Polhamus and Pierre Shantz were arrested while attempting to clear the entrance to the town of Rantis, which had been blocked by the military with debris. In early April, Shantz climbed to the roof of a Palestinian home just as the Israeli military approached with a bulldozer to demolish it. He was kicked, slapped and pushed down the stairs. Also in April, Greg Rollins and Bob Holmes attempted another clearing of a road and sat down when the soldiers arrived; they were then dragged away. In these three cases, the individuals were released later without charges.²⁸

CPT's perceived partisanship, its willingness to take local matters into its own hands, and its readiness to get in the way physically are undoubtedly recognised by both Israeli settlers and by the Israeli police and military. Violent incidents involving the *police or military* have been, comparatively speaking, mild and infrequent. But *Israeli settlers* in Hebron and At-Tuwani and elsewhere have violently attacked CPT with frequency. Below are just two examples among many:

In September 2004 a group of masked settlers attacked and beat CPTers Kim Lamberty and Chris Brown with chains, breaking Lamberty's arm and puncturing Brown's lung. In October 2004 masked settlers attacked a group of five internationals including CPTers Diana Zimmerman and Dianne Janzen and severely beat an OD (Operation Dove) member, nearly rupturing his kidney and injuring his wrist.²⁹

International Solidarity Movement

The roots of the International Solidarity Movement (ISM) are in local resistance, not religion, originating in the al-Aqsa intifada begun in September 2000. Witnessing the carnage visited on Palestinian demonstrators as well as combatants in the ensuing violence, ISM's founders sought '...new ways to participate in the uprising that would not get demonstrators killed'.³⁰ Similar to CPT, the International Solidarity Movement is a 'solidarity' organisation that attempts to provide accompaniment even while it directly engages in partisan political work, including non-violent direct action and civil disobedience.³¹ It has operated in Palestine (its only deployment) since 2001. For our purposes here its most distinguishing features are two-fold, and I believe, quite related. First, ISM has been Palestinian-led from the beginning. Second, the internationals associated with it have been repeatedly targeted, arrested, deported, violently attacked, and even killed by Israeli security forces. ISM's self-description in their mandate, entitled 'Who We Are', follows:

The International Solidarity Movement (ISM) is a Palestinian-led movement committed to resisting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land using nonviolent, direct-action methods and principles. Founded by a small group of activists in August, 2001, ISM aims to support and strengthen the Palestinian popular resistance by providing the Palestinian people with two resources, international protection and a voice with which to nonviolently resist an overwhelming military occupation force.³²

In what continues in the tri-partite mandate below, ISM's commitment to and identification with non-violent direct action and civil disobedience alongside accompaniment practices is clearly stated:

Internationals with the ISM are not in Palestine to teach nonviolent resistance. Palestinians resist nonviolently every day. The ISM lends support to the Palestinian resistance to the occupation and their demand for freedom through the following activities:

Direct Action – challenging crippling check and curfew, confronting tanks and demolition equipment, removing roadblocks, participating in nonviolent demonstrations, accompanying farmers to their fields and protecting families whose homes are threatened with demolition. Emergency Mobilization – escorting ambulances through checkpoints, delivering food and water to families under curfew or house arrest, assisting the injured or disabled to access medical care and walking children to school.³³

Within six months of its founding, ISM was attempting to frame itself as an international observer mission that nonetheless engages in partisan direct actions. The statement below from ISM focuses on their role in fielding international civilians who will engage in concrete acts of direct action and solidarity with the Palestinian non-violent resistance to the occupation:

From December 15, 2001 through January 1, 2002, the International Solidarity Movement will be welcoming dozens of international civilians. . . to the Occupied Palestinian. . . Protesting the refusal of the international community to send monitors . . . foreign civilians will be taking it upon themselves to act in defense of Palestinian human rights. The two-week campaign will highlight the brutal, repressive and lethal policies of the Israeli occupation as the root cause of the violence in the region. International activists will join Palestinian locals in non-violent direct-action resistance. . . [including] marches, roadblock removals and crop harvesting and olive tree planting in villages devastated by Israeli settlers and military.³⁴

A notable dimension of the self-description above is the framing of ISM as taking the place of international observers sent by intergovernmental organisations and international non-governmental organisations (INGOs). The organisation equates the work of their volunteers with the work of these more traditional international observers. Yet ISM goes on to state that their volunteers will engage directly in acts of non-violent resistance alongside the Palestinians. This is not the kind of work that one would normally associate with 'international observers' in the more traditional senses of that term. There is a blurring and conflation of roles here that is typical both of ISM's discourse and of its work in the field. As will be argued below, this blurring appears to be a contributing influence to the treatment of ISM workers by Israel.

On 1 February 2003, Susan Barclay was arrested on security grounds by the Israeli military and deported. She admitted to the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* that she had worked actively with Hamas and Islamic Jihad in Palestine as part of her service with ISM:

In fact, Barclay said in an interview with the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, she knowingly worked with representatives from Hamas and Islamic Jihad – terrorist groups that sponsor suicide bombings and exist, according to their charters, to demolish the Jewish state entirely. Barclay acknowledged that in organizing a non-violent February march on an Israel-imposed gate that divided eastern and western Nablus, she worked with representatives from the two groups. 'We are open to working with any political party as long as they are interested in non-violent resistance,' Barclay said. 'It's almost irrelevant who is participating.'³⁵

A cascade of events in the spring of 2003 severely hampered ISM's ability to continue to attract international volunteers and its effectiveness in the region; in fact, it has never recouped its earlier vigor.³⁶ In rapid succession, on 3 March, 4 April and 11 April 2003, three ISM international volunteers were either maimed or killed by the Israeli military.

First, in what has become an infamous event and the subject of numerous lawsuits, an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) bulldozer crushed US citizen and ISM international volunteer

Rachel Corrie on 25 March 2003 while she was physically intervening with ISM in a home demolition in Rafah, Gaza. This was followed a few days later by the Israeli military allegedly finding Shadi Sukiya, a member of Islamic Jihad, hiding in an ISM office in Jenin.³⁷ Only a week later, on 5 April, ISM international volunteer Brian Avery was shot in the face and permanently disfigured in Jenin.³⁸ The next week, on 11 April, another ISM international volunteer Tom Hurndall was shot and killed by a decorated Israeli sniper with a high-powered scope as he attempted to protect Palestinian schoolchildren. He was clearly targeted, and according to a British jury ruling three years later, he was 'intentionally killed' by the IDF.³⁹

Tom was about to leave, when he noticed two small girls still in front of the roadblock and in the line of fire. He was moving to help them when an Israeli soldier in the tower, about 300 meters in front of him, shot a high calibre sniper bullet directly into his head. He was wearing an orange fluorescent jacket with reflective stripes, and was in full body view of the tower. The British Embassy had been informed of his presence, who had in turn informed the Israeli military.⁴⁰

A fourth example of direct attacks by the state of Israel on international volunteers of the ISM occurred five years later. US citizen Blake Murphy worked for eight months in 2007–2008 in the Palestinian Occupied Territories with ISM, including six months in the highly visible position of ISM media coordinator. On 14 March 2008, while taking part in a weekly demonstration against the separation wall, Murphy was assaulted by Israeli soldiers, maced, thrown to the ground and repeatedly kicked and beaten. This is all clearly depicted on the video ISM posted on YouTube, a common information dissemination tactic for ISM. He was also arrested and ISM says that he was not given proper access to a lawyer. Murphy was subsequently deported.⁴¹

ISM insists that Murphy was singled out for arrest at the demonstration given his high profile work on behalf of the resistance. The video supports this interpretation. It also shows that Murphy was wearing a 'kuffiyeh', the traditional Palestinian headdress or scarf that is a high-profile symbol of solidarity for the Palestinian resistance to the occupation. This garb stands in stark distinction to the practices of Peace Brigades International and even that of Christian Peacemaker Teams. Each take pains to *distinguish* their international volunteers from the local population they accompany through the use of uniforms, caps and armbands in colours that are deliberately chosen as likely to be perceived as non-partisan and politically neutral in the local context.

Finally, many organisations that rely upon accompaniment, including PBI, draw a sharp line between violent actions and non-violent action. They will not accompany local activists who use violence in any form, believing that it compromises the dynamics of the 'paradox of repression', whereby violent suppression tactics used by the state against even its own citizens are more easily justified when carried out in response to citizen violence.⁴² There is some debate within ISM about the definitions and meanings of violent actions and non-violent actions; distinctions are blurred and there are few sharp lines. Always a somewhat difficult task, clearly defining what is violent and what is non-violent is immeasurably complicated by the fact that ISM is operating within the constricting confines of a starkly asymmetrical conflict between the Israeli state and Palestinians. This is also not a new debate. Going all the way back to the original Intifada in the late 1980s, the stone-throwing that became a prominent feature of even those Palestinians who professed a commitment to non-violent resistance has been much debated as to its appropriateness as a non-violent tactic.⁴³ The debate continues today in the work of ISM. In the example below a former international volunteer recounts a scene where ISM provided accompaniment for stone-

throwing Palestinian youths. Six international companions from ISM were subsequently shot with rubber bullets by the IDF as a result:

I witnessed a confrontational demonstration against the wall near Tulkarem where six internationals were injured by rubber bullets while protecting stone-throwing teenagers, and at the time of my leaving the country, the debate was still continuing on this issue.⁴⁴

Discussion

In what follows, I will briefly discuss and interpret some of the specific incidents and the broader cases described above; they will be treated in the order presented in the preceding pages.

In the early years of the Mutual Support Group case with Peace Brigades in Guatemala, we saw the government's repeated accusations that PBI was engaged in partisan actions, 'meddling' in Guatemala's internal affairs. The highest levels of the national government also used these accusations to claim that PBI was acting 'illegally'. Intense international and diplomatic pressure, which rested on the counter-claim that PBI was, in fact, non-partisan and demonstrably uninvolved in the work of the Mutual Support Group and others it accompanied, eventually turned the tide and direct attacks on PBI subsided.

Somewhat later in the Olga Maria and Vivekananda incidents, PBI's activities were successfully constructed by the Guatemalan and Sri Lankan authorities not only as politically partisan, but also as a violation of the local laws that the organisation was bound to honour as guests in the country. The authorities acted upon the well-established notion that the state had an inviolable right and a responsibility to preserve and enforce adherence to law. As a result, in both instances the diplomatic communities – upon which all accompaniment organisations must rely to some extent as their advocates and even at times their protectors – were put in difficult and delicate positions. When their foreign nationals break the laws of host countries while engaging in actions that may be easily construed as partisan (however non-violent they may be), diplomats and other INGO and international organisation (IO) supporters lose some of their own lobbying leverage vis-à-vis the host state. By PBI teams being present at the illegal occupation of the Olga Maria plantation in Guatemala and by entering the Vivekananda refugee camp in Sri Lanka without permission, the embassies of the PBI volunteers ended up serving the interests of the host state. This was done at the expense of protecting their own nationals within PBI and also at the expense of promoting and protecting human rights more broadly in the country. That is, because PBI's illegal activities, combined with the ease with which the state could construct PBI's actions as politically partisan, left the embassies and PBI's supporters with little room to manoeuvre to protect the PBI teams from the Guatemalan and the Sri Lankan state's repressive push-back. It is precisely these kinds of experiences that have congealed PBI's dual commitment to non-partisanship and to respect for the local law in international accompaniment work.

With regard to the CPT examples above, the variance in police/military and settler actions may suggest perceptions of underlying risk arising for different parties from CPT's perceived partisanship, its aggressive interventionism and its civil disobedience. For example, CPT's 'getting in the way' may temporarily inconvenience Israel's carrying out of its occupation and settlement policies, but it does not represent a direct threat to the Israeli state or to its security forces. On the other hand, CPT's actions likely represent real economic risks to the settlers whose settling apparently includes an intention to push

the Palestinians out of these newly settled and now contested areas through consistent intimidation. In that sense CPT's work represents a quality of life issue for the settlers as well. These differences between the meanings and risk values that CPT's work represents for the settlers and for the state may account for the differences in emotional intensity and the potential of violence in interactions between CPT and the Israeli security forces versus between CPT and the settlers.

Moreover, although settlers act on government policies that encourage expropriation of Palestinian land, they are not representative of the state of Israel in any way remotely similar to how the police and military represent the state. This affords both the settlers and the state political cover with regard to the repeated and severe levels of violence visited upon both the resisting Palestinians and their international companions *by the settlers*. Equally significant is the fact that news coverage of settler violence and abuse is little covered or covered in a slanted way in influential parts of the West like the United States, as is the general pattern of police and military refusal to reign in settler violence.⁴⁵

Christian Peacemaker Teams and the International Solidarity Movement work in the same areas in the same conflict. It is difficult, if not impossible, in a qualitative study of this sort to determine how much of the settlers' and how much of Israel's violent responses to CPT and ISM field workers is the result of their perceived partisanship and their civil disobedience that break local laws, versus how much is the result of the unusual degree of comparative impunity that Israel enjoys internationally for its governing practices within Israel proper, as well as in Palestine and the Territories.⁴⁶ It does seem reasonable to argue, however, that it is most likely a combination of those three factors – even if we cannot parse out exactly how much to attribute to each factor in the two cases.

Both CPT and ISM engage in direct actions, including civil disobedience. Both are easily perceived as partisan insofar as each are intimately involved in actively doing the work of the groups that they accompany. But ISM is much more so since it is Palestinian-led and actually part of the resistance. Unlike PBI, in whose long history its field workers have seldom been attacked, arrested, or deported, CPT and ISM workers are each regularly and violently attacked by the settlers. In addition, the internationals of both organisations are commonly harassed, detained and arrested by Israel.

Yet there are also some important differences in the treatment of the two organisations. Only ISM internationals are regularly deported; only ISM internationals are regularly violently attacked by the state of Israel; and only ISM internationals are killed by the IDF while doing accompaniment work.

Although ISM is Palestinian-led, it seems to assume that the protections that outsider status normally gives to foreign nationals is also transferable to an indigenous and highly partisan local organisation where the internationals are part of the local group, engaging directly in the work of resistance and following the lead of the locals. However, the examples presented above suggest that even ISM international volunteers are reframed by Israel from outsider to insider, and painted with a partisan political brush somewhat similar to that used for the local Palestinian resistance.⁴⁷ Moreover, such re-framing is easier for Israel or the settlers to do when ISM volunteers take a direct part in demonstrations and wear a kuffiyeh while doing so.

The history of the International Committee of the Red Cross suggests that strict non-partisanship in humanitarian work often secures access, tolerance and even improved treatment of prisoners and refugees.⁴⁸ The history of Peace Brigades International suggests that firm non-partisanship in international accompaniment can increase political space for local actors and moderate aggression by dominant parties in even highly asymmetric conflicts.⁴⁹ When PBI had a team in Aceh in Indonesia in the early 2000s, its commitment

to disciplined non-partisanship and transparency was the major factor enabling the organisation to be one of the very few international organisations allowed to work in Aceh at all while it was under military control and suffering severe repression. Moreover, PBI was supported and ‘sponsored’ in Aceh by the National Human Rights Commission, making it possible for PBI to work in the country. Commissioners asserted that PBI’s non-partisanship and transparency about its work were crucial elements enabling them to justify support for PBI.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the group of accompaniment cases and incidents analysed here – which were marked by partisanship, direct interventionist action and illegal activities – suggest that those types of actions tend to compromise status for international actors, erode their leverage points, reduce their ability to promote and protect human rights activism by local actors, and even court aggression and violent attacks. Veronique Dudouet makes a similar argument in her useful analysis of ISM, claiming that accompaniment tactics that are ‘proactive and constructive’ rather than the ‘confrontational and disruptive’ tactics of ISM are likely to be more useful and more sustainable.⁵¹

Like other non-violent action tactics, accompaniment is open to attack or exploitation from repressive governments and para-state organisations through discrediting, eroding bystander support, physical assault and expulsion. For international accompaniment to be more effective, these and other associated vulnerabilities must be reduced. Non-partisanship, moderate levels of interventionism and the obeying of host country laws are useful ways to reduce vulnerabilities as they give repressors fewer soft spots to attack while making it easier for the diplomatic and NGO communities to support the accompaniment organisation and its field work. This argument parallels Gene Sharp’s principle of political jui-jitsu and the paradox of oppression dynamic, each of which state that attacks on non-violent activists often boomerang and are counter-productive, eroding the legitimacy of the attacker and increasing support for the non-violent activists. Similarly, attacks on non-partisan accompaniers who are respecting local laws can be counterproductive by mobilising greater support and empathy for the accompaniment workers and their clients. While non-violent discipline is imperative to successfully engaging political jui-jitsu and the paradox of repression, so non-partisanship and respect for local laws can be said to be vital to its accompaniment counterpart.⁵²

To a repressive state, protective accompaniment done in a partisan way by engaging in the work of those being accompanied as they resist state repression likely appears as aggression. This is even more the case when the partisan actions are highly interventionist and include civil disobedience and law-breaking. When an international accompaniment organisation breaks the laws of the host country, it is likely to reduce the organisation’s perceived legitimacy and compromises its capacity to pressure the host government on human rights. Indeed, as I have shown above, it may even provide easily exploitable openings for that government to emasculate, manipulate and neutralise the organisation and its workers, thereby restricting safe political spaces in the country for the exercise of human rights, the result of which is the opposite of that intended by the accompaniment organisation.

I have tried to argue by way of examples that those locals who are provided with international accompaniment are likely better served through non-partisanship and more moderate forms of interventionism, including adherence to local laws. The above conclusions notwithstanding, human rights protection through international accompaniment has always been and will continue to be both a politically and an ethically complicated endeavour. Even after the identification of the patterns and the resultant discussion offered here, that will not soon change. There are no easy answers, particularly in a moment of crisis. Decisions will still have to be taken in the field at a critical flashpoint, including about how much to become involved or how much to physically get in the way. Accompaniers

will still have to make split-second decisions that may involve liberty and life itself – both for those they escort and themselves. The modest principles and lessons articulated here must always be weighed against tangible human realities and real human needs.

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Notes

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 10. Winnie Romeril, interviewed by Patrick G. Coy, at Prattsburgh, NY, 10 October 2008.
 11. Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*, 18.
 12. Liam Mahony, 'Peace Brigades International: Nonviolence in Action', in *Nonviolent Intervention Across Borders: A Recurrent Vision*, ed. Yeshua Moser-Puangsuwan and Thomas Weber (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2000), 138.
 13. Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*, 107–15.
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 15. Diplomats I interviewed from the Swedish, Dutch and Australian embassies in 1993–1994 in Sri Lanka (three embassies with significant influence in Sri Lanka thanks in part to their country's substantial aid programmes to the country) all maintained that PBI's clear non-partisanship in accompaniment work and its conservative approach to interpositioning and legal matters made it much easier for them to support and to lobby on behalf of PBI and its companions.
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 17. Mahony and Eguren, *Unarmed Bodyguards*, 115–29.
 18. About a week after the three PBI workers were deported from Guatemala, the organisation did break its public silence on the event by placing an advertisement in a major local newspaper. Trying to draw a distinction between partisan participation and accompaniment, PBI emphasised in the advert that its members did not instigate, direct or participate in the occupation itself. The advert also claimed that PBI's mission was humanitarian, not political, and that it honoured principles of both non-violence and non-partisanship.
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 24. Nishan Muthukrishna and Mario Gomez, letter to the editor, *Island*, 17 July 1993, 7.
 25. While non-partisanship and adherence to local laws are good general principles which tend to lead to effective accompaniment, there are doubtless cases where exceptions can and should be made. For instance, a team could make a strategic assessment in a particular case that the need

for protection of local activists is so great as to warrant higher degrees of interventionism and law-breaking by the team. In such scenarios, the organisation would then have to make a transparent case for the legitimacy of its team's actions as a necessary protection, arguing that the potential trespasses and law-breaking were required on the grounds of avoiding the greater risk of violence against innocent citizens. And then if called to account by a local government for those same actions, the organisation would have to vigorously defend itself and its choices while continuing to provide accompaniment, even at the risk of expulsion. If applied to the cases examined here, this line of argument would presume that the mistakes made by PBI had less to do with too much interventionism and with failing to observe local laws and more to do with backing down in the face of government threats, thereby ceding too much power to the government. I thank Liam Mahony for this insightful alternative analysis.

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35. Sam Skolnik, 'Activist's Death Focuses Spotlight on Mideast Struggle', *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 19 March 2003.
36. Gordon, 'Against the Wall', 412.
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43. Andrew Rigby, *Living the Intifada* (London: Zed, 1991).
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50. I thank Liam Mahony for this example of a positive case bolstering the argument on behalf of the utility of non-partisanship. For details on the Aceh case, see Laine Berman and Liam Mahony, 'Peace Brigades International – Indonesia Project Final Evaluation Report', August 28, 2004.
51. Dudouet, 'Cross-Border Nonviolent Advocacy during the Second Palestinian Intifada', 125. Of course, it may also be that in highly asymmetric conflicts like the one in Palestine violent attacks on internationals like those suffered by ISM field workers can be empowering for some local activists who see such attacks as a sign that their struggle is valued strongly by outsiders who are willing to risk life and limb on their behalf.
52. Thanks to Brian Martin for suggesting this insightful comparison. On Sharp's theory of political ju-jitsu, please see Gene Sharp, *The Dynamics of Nonviolent Action*, Part Three of *The Politics of Nonviolent Action* (Boston, MA: Porter Sargeant Publishers, 1973), especially chapters 11 and 12. On the paradox of repression, see Smithey and Kurtz, "'We have Bare Hands'", 111–13.

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