

31 March 2016

Mexico - Disappearance of human rights defender Fidencio Gómez Sántiz

Approximately three weeks since he was last seen on, 5 March 2016, the whereabouts of human rights defender Mr **Fidencio Gómez Sántiz** remain unknown. He was last seen leaving his family in Ocosingo, Chiapas.

Fidencio Gómez Sántiz is an indigenous human rights defender who has been involved in the fight against impunity for extrajudicial killings of indigenous persons in Chiapas. He is a member of [**Frente Nacional de Lucha por el Socialismo - FNLS**](#) (National Front for the Fight for Socialism), a grassroots movement established in 2006, which works for the promotion of food security, the sustainable use of natural resources in Mexico, and to defend labour, social and indigenous rights. [**FNLS**](#) is also engaged in the denouncement and public condemnation of human rights violations perpetrated by the Mexican government, specifically those related to enforced disappearances, extra-judicial killings, arbitrary detention and political prisoners.

The human rights defender was last seen on 5 March 2016, between 3 pm and 4 pm, at the Jet Ja transport terminal, near the local market of Ocosingo, Chiapas, accompanied by his wife and son. After leaving his family members, who were travelling to a relative's house, Fidencio Gómez Sántiz began to travel back to his home in the municipality of Altamirano. Approximately 5 minutes later, his son attempted to call him to make sure that his father had taken public transport home, however, his father did not answer. He has not been seen since and remains missing.

Four months prior to the human rights defender's disappearance, in [**November 2015**](#), FNLS organised a round of activities in Mexico City to denounce the situation faced by indigenous human rights defenders in Chiapas. During the campaign, human rights defenders Mr **Matías Flores**, Mr **Jesús Hernández Reyes** and Mr **Rubicél Hernández García** suffered an assassination attempt. This followed the killing of the Chiapas based indigenous human rights defender Mr **Héctor Sántiz López**, in September 2015.

The prominent local human rights organisations [**Comité Cerezo**](#) believes that Fidencio Gómez Sántiz's disappearance may have been carried out with the participation or acquiescence of Mexican law enforcement agents in what would constitute an enforced disappearance. The belief is based on several previous acts of intimidation perpetrated against members of the FNLS in Chiapas by state security officers, and a pattern of enforced disappearance in Mexico, where, as stated by UN High Commissioner for Human rights Mr Zeid Ra'as Al Hussein after his visit to the country in October 2015, there are "at least [**26,000 people missing**](#), many believed to be as a result of enforced disappearances, since 2007".

Front Line Defenders expresses grave concern for the fate and whereabouts of Fidencio Gómez Sántiz, particularly in light of the existing pattern of violence perpetrated against indigenous human rights defenders and persons in the state of Chiapas, and members of FNLS. Front Line Defenders believes that his disappearance is directly linked to his peaceful and legitimate human rights work.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Immediately take all necessary measures to locate human rights defender Fidencio Gómez Sántiz and to ensure his physical and psychological integrity and security, as well as that of his family members;
2. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the disappearance of Fidencio Gómez Sántiz, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of all members of Frente Nacional de Lucha por el Socialismo;
4. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Mexico are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions.