

18 December 2019

### **Mexico: Land rights defender Pedro Uc Be receives death threats**

On 16 December 2019, human rights defender **Pedro Uc Be** received a WhatsApp message containing death threats directed at him and his family. The same message was sent to his two children and his ex-partner. They were told they had 48 hours to leave their community to avoid being killed.

[Pedro Uc Be](#) is a Mayan land rights defender, writer, translator, teacher, who promotes and protects Mayan culture and land. As a member of the Assembly of Defenders of the Mayan Territory *Múuch' Xíinbal* and the Indigenous National Congress (CNI), he has worked on the protection of lands of Mayan peoples affected by mega-projects, including transgenic soybean production, pig farms, renewable energy plants, high-impact tourism and the 'Mayan Train', which is intended to be both a tourist and regional train that would cross the states of Chiapas, Tabasco, Campeche, Yucatán and Quintana Roo. Through his work as a defender of human rights, Pedro Uc Be invites communities to critically reflect on and revalue Mayan culture and language, and to inform themselves on their indigenous land rights.

On 16 December 2019 at 1:17p.m., Pedro Uc Be received a WhatsApp message with violent and vulgar language. The sender threatened to kill him and his family and he was told they had 48 hours to leave their community. The message also included personal details about his family, such as the names of his two children and the date of birth of his ex-partner and ends by saying that "(...) you are affecting many local people with your [shit] and your defence of the territory, it is just an invention to [get money] for nothing. 48 hours". Front Line Defenders believes the message is referring to the visibility he has given to the defence of land rights, especially in view of his recent denunciations in several media outlets of the inadequate citizen consultation implemented by the federal government regarding the 'Mayan Train'. Pedro Uc Be had denounced that the consultation violated the rights of indigenous peoples enshrined in international law, such as Convention 169 of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

Under the slogan "We neither rent nor sell the land", Pedro Uc Be has dedicated himself to the defence of indigenous land for many years. He was involved in the Agreement for the Sustainability of the Yucatan Peninsula (ASPY) in 2016 and 2017, in which he obtained an injunction to suspend the project for violating the communities' right to prior and informed consultation. He was also involved in campaigns against wind and photovoltaic energy projects that did not comply with the duty of consent of the local communities.

Front Line Defenders is concerned by the threats received by Pedro Uc Be for his defence of indigenous land and territorial rights. Front Line Defenders also believes that these threats could be retaliation for his work educating Mayan peoples about their rights and for his denunciations of human rights violations stemming from mega-projects.

**Front Line Defenders urges the Mexican authorities to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, rigorous and impartial investigation into the threats against Pedro Uc Be, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Pedro Uc Be and his family;
3. Guarantee in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Mexico can carry out their legitimate work in defence of human rights without fear of reprisals and free from all types of restrictions.