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19 August 2025

### **Mexico: Attempt to criminalise and stigmatise migrant rights defender Luis García Villagrán**

On 13 August 2025, the Attorney General of the Republic's Office filed an appeal against the decision of the judiciary not to proceed with the prosecution of migrant rights defender **Luis García Villagrán**. The human rights defender was released on 11 August 2025 after being detained in the state of Chiapas since 5 August 2025 under an arrest warrant.

[Luis García Villagrán](#) is a human rights defender from Mexico and founder of the Centre for Human Dignity A.C., an organisation that provides support to migrants. He has fifteen years of experience defending the rights and human dignity of the migrant population. Over the years, the human rights defender has been subjected to threats, stigmatisation and criminalisation for this work, which led to him becoming a beneficiary of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists in 2019.

On 13 August 2025, the Attorney General of the Republic's Office appealed the decision of the judiciary not to proceed with the prosecution of migrant rights defender Luis García Villagrán. The previous day, on 12 August 2025, during the federal government's morning press conference, the Attorney General of the Republic's Office, Alejandro Gertz Manero, criticised the judge's decision and announced that the State was going to appeal it and initiate proceedings against the judge of the case. When the press pointed out that Luis García Villagrán is a beneficiary of the Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders, the Secretary of the Interior answered that this is unrelated to his legal situation.

On 11 August 2025, the preliminary hearing of the case was held, in which the Supervisory Judge of the Federal Criminal Justice Centre in Tapachula reviewed the arguments of the Prosecutor and decided not to bring charges against the human rights defender and to revoke the pre-trial detention measure. The judge ruled that there was insufficient evidence to proceed with the indictment, on the contrary that Luis García Villagrán is not part of a criminal organisation, but rather his work focuses on defending human rights.

In addition to Luis García Villagrán's detention, members of the federal authorities have made statements stigmatising and justifying the criminalisation of his human rights work accompanying migrants. On 6 August 2025, the President of the Republic stated during her morning press conference that human rights defender Luis García Villagrán 'is not an activist, he had an arrest warrant and is linked to human trafficking'.

On 5 August 2025, Luis García Villagrán was arrested and detained in Tapachula by agents of the Secretariat of Security and Citizen Protection, the Secretariat of National Defence, the Secretariat of the Navy, the Attorney General's Office, and the National Guard, in coordination with the Secretariat of Security of the People of Chiapas. The arrest took place one day prior to the scheduled departure of a migrant caravan that was due to leave Tapachula for the north of the country, protesting the lack of institutional responses to guarantee the rights of migrants in Mexico.

On that same day, the human rights defender was taken to the State Attorney General's Office and subsequently to the Federal Judiciary in Tapachula, where his indictment hearing was held and he was formally remanded in custody and charged with organised crime for human trafficking. Finally, Luis García Villagrán was transferred to the State Centre for Social Reintegration of Convicts No. 3 in Tapachula and held in pre-trial detention.

In addition to the efforts of the Prosecutor's Office to pursue charges lacking in evidence, which have already resulted in a favourable initial ruling for the human rights defender, it is concerning that federal authorities have spoken out strongly in defence of the arrest warrant without respecting the presumption of innocence or taking into consideration that these actions are a form of criminalising the human rights work Luis García Villagrán has carried out in the last fifteen years.

The case against Luis García Villagrán adds to a pattern of targeting migrant rights defenders such as [Cristóbal Sánchez and Irineo Mujica](#) who were released in 2019 due to insufficient evidence. This pattern has been previously documented by Front Line Defenders and [Red TdT and the PRAMI evidencing that](#) attacks on this group of human rights defenders are not limited to non-governmental groups and that the governmental authorities have promoted and justified actions to continue restricting the work of those defending migrants rights.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned with the attempt to criminalise the migrant rights defender Luis García Villagrán and believes that he is being targeted solely to delegitimise his work. Furthermore the organisation strongly condemns the stigmatisation of his work by the Mexico authorities.

#### **Front Line Defenders calls on the authorities in Mexico to:**

1. Immediately cease the criminalisation of migrant rights defender Luis García Villagrán;
2. Take measures to ensure that government officials or other public figures refrain from making public statements or declarations stigmatising the legitimate work of migrant rights defenders;
3. Ensure in all circumstances that all human rights defenders in Mexico, especially those protecting the rights of migrants, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.

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