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### **Mexico: arbitrary detention and criminalization of indigenous maya Tsotsil defender Mario Gómez López**

On 30 January 2025, the Judge of Control of the Ordinary Court ratified the detention of human rights defender **Mario Gómez López** despite the resolution of an amparo process that ordered its liberation. The defender was detained by the municipal police of San Cristóbal de Las Casas in the state of Chiapas on 24 January 2025 without being informed of the motive of his arrest.

[Mario Gómez López](#) is a maya Tsotil human rights defender and builder in the Santa Cruz community from the Cuxtitali El Pinar common land, in the San Cristóbal de Las Casas municipality in the state of Chiapas. Within his community, Mario Gomez Lopez has advocated for the rights of indigenous people by denouncing the presence of criminal groups that violently dispute and appropriate the indigenous territory. The human rights defender has worked within his community and participated in peaceful protests, demanding that authorities ensure the safety of the community and their rights. He has also advocated and demanded justice for the murder of his son Mateo Gómez López in 2021, which occurred within the same context of insecurity in the community. Due to this work, Mario Gómez López and his wife, woman human rights defender Pascuala López López, have been subjected to threats and attacks. Pascuala was a targeted of attempted femicide in April 2022 for denouncing the presence of criminal groups in the community and for demanding justice in the case of their son Mateo Gómez. They have both been beneficiaries of precautionary measures by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) since 2023.

On 24 January 2025, at 8:00 a.m., Mario Gómez López was detained by members of the municipal police of San Cristóbal de Las Casas on his way to work as a builder. He was subsequently taken to the State Social Reinsertion Centre (CERSS) 14 El Amate in the municipality of Cintalapa. The next day, his defence lawyer and representatives of two human rights organizations went to visit him in the detention centre, where they faced resistance from the authorities whilst being admitted. On that same day the initial hearing with request for trial took place. The human rights defender has a resolution of a process of amparo that rescinded the detention order, but to this day he has not been freed.

Mario Gómez López is accused of the crimes of disturbing the peace, as well as the bodily and property integrity of the community and the State, established in article 369 of the Criminal Code of Chiapas, in relation to a violent attack against three people whose houses were burned on 17 April 2023. The defender was not present when these events took place.

Mr. López faces heightened risks to his physical integrity since he is being detained at CERSS 14 El Amate alongside a member of a criminal group who has been accused of attempted femicide against Mr. López's partner Ms. Pascuala López López.

Front Line Defenders expresses its concern with the criminalization and violence against human rights defender Mario Gómez López and his family, apparently in retaliation for his legitimate work in defending the rights of his community, as well as for demanding justice for the killing of his son and the attempted femicide of his partner Pascuala López. Front Line Defenders reiterates its particular concern over the acts of violence committed against indigenous peoples' rights defenders, as well as those who work in an environment surrounded by organised crime in Mexico. These individuals face a number of reprisals for their legitimate work in defence of human rights,

notably the undue use of criminal law, against them done with the purpose of restricting their defence of human rights.

**Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:**

1. Immediately drop all charges against human rights defender Mario Gómez López and release him in base of his legitimate and peaceful work in defence of human rights and search for justice;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety, as well as the physical and mental health of human rights defenders Mario Gómez López, Pascuala López López and their family members, who are beneficiaries of precautionary measures by the IACHR;
3. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the safety of all human rights defenders in Chiapas, who face particular risks due to working in an environment surrounded by organised crime;
4. Ensure that all human rights defenders in Mexico are able to conduct their peaceful and legitimate activities without undue restrictions and without fear of harassment, threats or retaliation.

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