July 31, 2020

Dear Sirs:

We are writing because of our deep concern for the safety and well-being of imprisoned human rights defender Fredy García, the spokesperson for the Committee for the Defense of Indigenous Peoples (CODEDI), who was beaten and threatened by prison guards in Tanivet prison in Tlacolula, Oaxaca.

On the morning of July 10, guards entered Fredy García’s cell and severely beat him, saying that they were acting on “orders from above.” They threatened him to not issue a complaint against them, transferred him to an isolated area of the prison, and then continued to beat him. On July 12 he was transferred to a cell in a different block where his use of the telephone is severely restricted, and he is forced to work outdoors in areas with very little shade.

Shortly after this incident, the wife of Fredy García traveled six hours to visit him during usual visiting hours (9am-5pm) but was restricted to a 20-minute visit. She saw his injuries, including several bruises and a blood spilt in his left eye. Prison authorities told her that Fredy García was currently placed in a punishment zone of the prison.

The arrest and criminalization of Freddy Garcia is part of a strategy of intimidation and violence against indigenous and environmental rights defenders. He has been in Tanivet prison since November of 2019 on fabricated charges of “assault,” “injuries” and “aggravated robbery.” A scheduled court date in March 2020 was postponed as a consequence of COVID-19 and has not been rescheduled.

We strongly urge you to

- conduct a thorough and impartial investigation into the harsh treatment of Fredy García, publish the results, and bring the perpetrators to justice
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity of Fredy García, including the provision of quality medical care
- guarantee that the treatment of Fredy García in detention adheres to the conditions established in the “Set of Principles for the protection of all persons under any form of detention or prison,” adopted by resolution 43/173 of the UN General Assembly of December 9, 1988

As a consequence of your high position in the State of Oaxaca, you have the ability and the obligation to protect the rights of all your citizens. We encourage you to do so.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Christine Stonebraker Martínez
Co-Coordinators

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: