

via US mail and email Sr. Gobernador Salomón Jara Cruz Governor of the State of Oaxaca	via US mail and email José Bernardo Rodríguez Alamilla Attorney General/Chief Prosecutor of Oaxaca
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April 1, 2023

Dear Sirs:

In the early hours of March 24 in San Juan Guichicovi, Oaxaca, state police, along with a group of civilians, attacked a peaceful protest camp of the **Union of Indigenous Communities of the Northern Zone of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (UCIZONI)**, leaving two people injured. Despite this act of aggression, the community has been able to keep its protest camp intact.

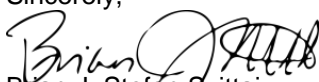
UCIZONI has been mobilizing for the rights of Indigenous peoples for the past 37 years. Recently, members of UCIZONI have been organizing resistance to the modernization of railroads in Oaxaca because of threats to their territories and the environment. On March 24, they had been peacefully blocking a section of the Mogoñe Viejo-Vixidu railroad tracks for 24 days. The Mogoñe Viejo-Vixidu railroad is a section of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec railroad, which is being constructed in Indigenous territories, without their free, prior and informed consent, as required by international law (International Labor Convention 169). The railroad, which will be protected with a militarized border, is intended to serve a commercial-industrial corridor, which will include commercial ports, highways, digital connectivity networks, a gas pipeline, and ten industrial parks. The plan is for the railroad to connect with another large-scale investment project called Tren Maya. To the twelve Indigenous communities living in the area, these projects pose risks to their livelihoods, preservation of their territory, and the environment.

Construction of the commercial-industrial corridor is highly unpopular among Indigenous communities in Oaxaca. Their resistance has been met with attacks by civilians and state security forces, as well as stigmatization from high profile authorities from the Mexican government. In a press conference on March 21, President López Obrador described UCIZONI and human rights defender Carlos Beas (UCIZONI's representative), as "fiercely opposing the projects and sabotaging the progress." The Mexican Center for Environmental Law (CEMDA) has registered 26 aggressions against Indigenous rights defenders between October 2021 and March 2023, all related to the construction of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec railroad.

We urge authorities in Mexico to respect the sovereign rights of Indigenous communities and:

- initiate an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the attack on March 24, identify those responsible, bring them before a competent and impartial tribunal, and apply the sanctions provided by law
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security and physical and psychological integrity of the members of the UCIZONI, in strict accordance with their wishes
- ensure that human rights, Indigenous, and environmental defenders can carry out their legitimate activities without fear of reprisals, in accordance with the 1998 United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the 2018 Escazú Agreement, which guarantees public participation in environmental decision-making
- take the necessary measures to ensure that public officials refrain from making statements that stigmatize the legitimate work of human rights, Indigenous, and environmental defenders.

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker Martinez

copies: Sr. President Andrés Manuel Lopez Obrador ~ via US mail
 Ombudsman for Human Rights of the State of Oaxaca / Defensoría de los Derechos Humanos del Pueblo de Oaxaca ~ via email
 Adán Augusto López, Minister of the Interior of Mexico ~ via email
 Capitán Iván García Álvarez, Secretario de Seguridad y Protección Pública de Oaxaca/ Secretary of Public Security and Protection ~ via US mail
 Esteban Moctezuma Barragán, Ambassador of Mexico to the US ~ via email
 Esmeralda Arosemena de Troitiño, Rapporteur for Mexico, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via US mail and email
 Ken Salazar, US Ambassador to Mexico ~ via US mail and email
 Political Officer, Office of Mexican Affairs, US State Dept ~ via email
 US Senators Brown & Vance ~ via email
 US Representatives Balderson, Beatty, Brown, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Miller, Sykes ~ via email

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