

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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August 21, 2023

Dear Sirs:

We are writing to protest the criminalization of Zapotec Indigenous human rights defender **David Hernández Salazar**. He has been charged by the municipal authorities of San Blas Atempa in Oaxaca with the crimes of arson and attacks on roads. These charges are related to his active role in protesting against the installation of the “Polo de Desarrollo para el Bienestar” Industrial Park (PODEBI) in the communal territory of the Zapotec Binnizá Indigenous Community of Puente Madera as part of the Inter-Oceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (CIIT) project. The CIIT, which includes the construction of commercial ports, a network of primary and secondary roads, digital connectivity networks, a gas pipeline and ten industrial parks, poses significant risk to the environment and to the living conditions of the community.

David Hernández Salazar is the Community Municipal Agent of Puente Madera, a general coordinator of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defense of Land and Territory (APIIDTT) and of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). Since 2017, he has actively worked peacefully in defense of the right to the common use of lands known as El Pitayal, which were threatened by the extraction of petroleum in Cerro Igú and by the installation of the National Defense Secretariat Electrical Substation (SEDENA).

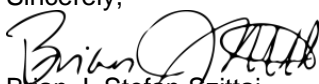
Since the PODEBI was approved by authorities in March 2021, David Hernández Salazar has led acts of protest and, in May 2021, the Secretary of Communications and Transportation (SCT) and the Municipality of San Blas Atempa filed criminal charges against him. In addition to his criminalization, officials from the three levels of government as well as state institutions, partisan organizations, politicians and businessmen connected with the installation of the PODEBI initiated a smear campaign against the human rights defender. David Hernández Salazar has been subjected to harassment and threats, and so have other inhabitants of Puente Madera and members of the APIIDTT. Arrest warrants have been issued for seventeen other members of the Binniza Indigenous Community of Puente Madera. The APIIDTT offices have been surveilled by armed individuals, and members have received several death threats via phone and text.

On July 17, David Hernández Salazar was physically and verbally assaulted at his home. On July 19, while he and the community secretary Guadalupe Ríos Maldonado were traveling in a van, they were hit by a 3.5-ton truck a few kilometers from the entrance of Puente Madera. This attack occurred five days after two other Binnizá community members were hit by a driver just before a visit by the governor of Oaxaca, whom the Binnizá are blaming for the campaigns of criminalization, defamation and hatred against the people defending Puente Madera. **Juan Cortés Meléndez**, age 31, was killed; **Kevin Alberto Solorzano Cortés**, age 17, was seriously injured.

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

- investigate the attacks against David Hernández Salazar (July 17, July 19) and Juan Cortés Meléndez and Kevin Alberto Solorzano Cortés (July 14), publish the results, and bring those responsible to justice
- drop the criminal charges against David Hernández Salazar and the investigations and arrest warrants against the members of the Binniza Indigenous Community of Puente Madera and guarantee their right to due process
- take all necessary measures to guarantee the security, physical and psychological integrity of David Hernández Salazar and the members of APIIDTT

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 and US Representatives 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: