

11 August 2020

## **Guatemala: Home of human rights defender Ubaldino García Canan raided**

On the night of 5 August 2020, unknown persons raided the home of indigenous rights defender **Ubaldino García Canan** in the municipality of Olopa, Chiquimula, stealing a number of belongings.

[Ubaldino García Canan](#) is a Maya Ch'orti indigenous rights defender from the municipality of Olopa in Chiquimula, where he participates in peaceful resistance with indigenous communities against the activities of the mining company Cantera Los Manantiales that are in violation of their human rights. The defender is also an interlocutor of the Maya Ch'orti Indigenous Council of Olopa, and carries out important work articulating the Council's efforts to cease illegal mining in the region, with local and international organisations.

On the night of 5 August 2020, unknown persons forcibly entered and raided Ubaldino García Canan's home and his adjoined business, a small grocery store. Money, products from the business and personal documents were stolen. At 9:00 am the following morning, authorities from the Maya Ch'orti Indigenous Council of Olopa, together with National Police officers, visited the defender's home to document evidence of the incident. The indigenous authorities concluded that the theft of personal documents suggests that the incident was motivated by more than economic interest.

Guatemalan human rights organisations have accused the Cantera Los Manantiales mining company, located in Chorti 'de Olopa, Chiquimula of committing serious human rights violations against indigenous peoples. In November 2019, [the Supreme Court of Justice \(CSJ\) suspended the license of the mining company Cantera Los Manantiales](#) and the [Court of Amparos granted the Maya Ch'orti Indigenous Council of Olopa](#) a provisional protection against the risks they were exposed to as a result of the mining activities, following the company's violation of the agreements it had signed with the community.

Ubaldino García Canan has filed several complaints before the Human Rights Prosecutor's office within the Public Ministry, and before the Unit for Crimes against Human Rights Activists, due to multiple threats, raids and acts of intimidation he has been subjected to since 2018. The defender was granted limited security measures implemented by the State for a period of six months in 2019 as a result of the threats he was facing. However, the defender has not been made aware of any progress in the investigations, nor have long-term effective measures been implemented to protect the life and integrity of the defender.

On 1 November 2018, the home of Norma Sancir, former communicator of the Central Campesina Chortí Nuevo Día (CCCND), which she shared with Ubaldino García Canan, was raided while they were sleeping, and their phones and money were stolen. Both filed a complaint before the Human Rights Division of the Public Ministry. On 5 November 2018, Norma Sancir noticed that a person was watching their home, after returning from a meeting with the Minister of Energy and Environment in the capital, in which the CCCND requested an end to mining in the region.

In the context of COVID-19, with human rights defenders facing increased risks, there has been numerous attacks and intimidation attempts against defenders in Olopa, to which Front Line Defenders has voiced its concern. On 15 June 2020, Maya Ch'orti' indigenous rights defender **Medardo Alonzo Lucero**, also a member of the Indigenous Council and a leader in the opposition movement against the activities of Cantera Los Manantiales, was found dead and displayed signs of torture, in La Cumbre, Olopa. Since April 2019, the Maya Ch'orti community of Olopa has reported surveillance of the homes of indigenous authorities by unknown persons, as well as continuous threats to members of the Indigenous Council.

Front Line Defenders is deeply concerned by the multiple threats, raids and acts of intimidation against human rights defender Ubaldino García Canan and believes that he is being targeted solely as a result of his peaceful activities in defense of the rights of indigenous peoples.

### **Front Line Defenders urges the Guatemalan authorities to:**

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the raid of Ubaldino García Canan's home, and the previous threats against him, in order to publish the results and bring those responsible to justice, in accordance with international standards;
2. Implement the necessary measures to guarantee the safety and physical and psychological integrity of Ubaldino García Canan, in consultation with him;
3. Guarantee that all human rights defenders, in particular indigenous and environmental rights defenders, are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Guatemala.