

**DUBLIN**

Front Line Defenders – Head Office  
First Floor, Avoca Court  
Temple Road, Blackrock  
Co. Dublin, A94 R7W3, Ireland

info@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +353 1 212 3750  
fax +353 1 233 8695

**BRUSSELS**

Front Line Defenders – EU Office  
Square Marie-Louise 72  
1000 Brussels  
Belgium

euoffice@frontlinedefenders.org  
www.frontlinedefenders.org

phone +32 2 230 9383  
fax +32 2 230 0028

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**Mexico: Criminal proceedings against human rights defender David Hernández Salazar, member of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defence of Land and Territory (APIIDTT)**

On 20 July 2023, the intermediary hearing in the criminal proceedings against human rights defender **David Hernández Salazar** will take place. 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 vindicating the right to territory of the Binniza Indigenous Community of Puente Madera by protesting against the installation of the “Polo de Desarrollo para el Bienestar” Industrial Park (PODEBI) on their common lands as part of the Inter-Oceanic Corridor of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec (CIIT) project.

[David Hernández Salazar](#) is a Community Municipal Agent in the area of Puente Madera, a general coordinator of the Assembly of Indigenous Peoples of the Isthmus in Defence of Land and Territory (APIIDTT) and of the National Indigenous Congress (CNI). Since 2017, he has actively worked peacefully in defence of the right to the common use lands known as El Pitayal, which were threatened by the extraction of petroleum in Cerro Igú and by the installation of the National Defence Secretariat Electrical Substation (SEDENA). As a member of APIIDTT, he has represented the Binniza Indigenous Community of Puente Madera in their work to vindicate their land rights that have been affected by the installation of the PODEBI on their common lands in the municipality of San Blas Atempa, which poses significant risk to the environment and to the living conditions of the community.

On 14 March 2021, the communal and municipal authorities decided to install the PODEBI in Oaxaca. This work is being undertaken within the larger CIIT project which includes the construction of commercial ports, a network of primary and secondary roads, digital connectivity networks, a gas pipeline and ten industrial parks. The project also plans to connect with another large-scale investment project called “Tren Maya”. The works comprising this project have also been a [source of conflict](#) and violence against land defenders and have caused violations to the rights of other indigenous communities in Oaxaca.

In response to the potential impact on human rights and the environment of the installation of the PODEBI, David Hernández Salazar 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 criminalisation, officials from the three levels of government as well as state institutions, partisan organisations, 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, as well as other inhabitants of Puente Madera and members of the APIIDTT.

In addition to the criminalisation faced by the human rights defender David Hernández Salazar, 17 other members of the Binniza Indigenous Community of Puente Madera have also been indicted and have had arrest warrants and investigations filed against them. Security incidents against the human rights defender David Hernández Salazar and members of the APIIDTT have also been reported, such as the surveillance of their offices by armed individuals and several death threats via phone and text. David Hernández Salazar and the APIIDTT are beneficiaries of the National Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists.

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Front Line Defenders expresses its concern regarding the acts of criminalisation and threats against the human rights defender David Hernández Salazar and other members of the APIIDTT, which it believes is motivated by their legitimate and peaceful activity in defence of human rights. The communities who are defending their land and territory in opposition to the CIIT project in the region of Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca are on high alert for violence and human rights violations, as well as to the continuous threat to their right to peacefully protest. Front Line Defenders reiterates its concern regarding the climate of impunity and lack of protection for land, territory and environmental rights defenders in Mexico.

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

1. Drop the 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;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the security, physical and psychological integrity of David Hernández Salazar and the members of APIIDTT, and of all human rights defenders who are defending their rights to land and territory in Oaxaca;
3. Take measures to guarantee that all human rights defenders, in the carrying out of their legitimate activities in defence of human rights, can operate freely without fear of restrictions or reprisals in Mexico.