

## Mexico: Cristóbal Sántiz Jiménez, detained for defending the displaced communities of Aldama

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Until March 14, 2020, **Cristóbal Sántiz Jiménez** worked as a guard at a vocational training centre in San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas. That day, he was heading back home when he was arrested by members of the Chiapas Prosecutor's Office Specialised Police on charges of "aggravated homicide". Since then, he has been kept under preventive detention for a crime he did not commit.

As the spokesperson of the Permanent Commission of the 115 community members and displaced persons of Aldama, where he comes from, Cristóbal has been publicly denouncing the armed attacks, robbery, destruction of crops, and house arson perpetrated against the Aldama population by a paramilitary group from the municipality of Chenalhó. The root cause of this violence: a conflict between the Aldama and Chenalhó municipalities over 60 hectares of land that dates back to the 1970s and that Mexican and Chiapas authorities have been incapable to adequately address.

Two years before his detention, Cristóbal had already been accused of and subsequently absolved for the crime of "aggravated homicide". This is not a coincidence. It is rather a prolongation of the harassment perpetrated against him by both State actors and the Chenalhó paramilitary group in retaliation for his work defending the rights of the displaced communities of the municipality of Aldama.

In August 2020, Cristóbal wrote a letter from the detention centre CERSS "El Amate", in which he analysed the nature of the dreams of his own displaced Tsotsil Mayan communities from Aldama. According to Cristóbal, all their nightmares were echoing the violence they have been subjected to for more than four years.

Today in the Chiapas Highlands this violence continues. None of the three non-aggression pacts signed by the municipalities of Aldama and Chenalhó since June 2019 have resulted in the end of the armed attacks and violence against the Maya Tsotsil communities in this region.

There are currently more than 3,000 people forcibly displaced in the municipality of Aldama, who are mired in a food crisis due to the impossibility to cultivate their lands. They are permanently under attack. In the meanwhile, Cristóbal remains unjustly detained because he has never been scared to defend their rights.

**Join our call to release Cristóbal Sántiz Jiménez!**