

16 April 2019

Killing of indigenous leader Luis Armando Fuentes in Oaxaca

On 11 April 2019, **Luis Armando Fuentes** was shot dead by unidentified persons in an ambush in San Francisco Ixhuatán. The attack against the human rights defender is the latest in a series of killings, enforced disappearances and attacks against indigenous leaders in Oaxaca.

[Luis Armando Fuentes](#) was an indigenous human rights defender and member of the Commission in Defence of the Land and the Territory of the East Istmo Zone (*Comisión en Defensa de la Tierra y el Territorio de la Zona Oriente del Istmo*), the Istmo Regional Committee (*Comité Regional Istmo*), and the **Corriente del Pueblo Sol Rojo**, a labour rights organisation working on the defence of economic, social and cultural rights, with a focus on land rights. The human rights defender worked on local human rights issues related to community development, accountability of local and national authorities in the context of corruption, as well as the promotion of the right to self-determination in the municipalities of Istmo de Tehuantepec.

On 11 April 2019, around 7pm, Luis Armando Fuentes was killed by a gunshot to the head during an ambush in San Francisco Ixhuatán, while he was on his way to the Cerro Grande community. Before his killing, Luis Armando Fuentes reported being threatened on several occasions by local authorities and members of the Federal Electricity Commission (*Comisión Federal de Electricidad*). The threats against him were made in relation to his human rights work, particularly his opposition to development policies that threaten the indigenous peoples' right to self-determination.

The killing of Luis Armando Fuentes occurred in the context of a renewed wave of attacks and intimidation attempts against Corriente del Pueblo Sol Rojo, which increased during the first months of 2019. The organisation has suffered reprisals for its peaceful resistance against mining and energy megaprojects which endanger the indigenous right to self-determination. Sol Rojo has also been targeted for their work on the case of [Ernesto Sernas García](#). The lawyer and human rights defender was enforcedly disappeared in May 2018 in relation to his work defending 25 members of Sol Rojo in a criminalisation case. During this period, members of Sol Rojo have faced attempts of surveillance, threats and break-ins, and have reported that one of their members had their computer stolen. On 25 March 2019, the San Francisco del Mar community leader, Bernardo Sánchez López, was attacked by three unidentified persons who broke into his home and physically attacked him. Shortly after, on 3 April 2019, woman human rights defender Rosa María Santiago received threats referring to her kids.

Front Line Defenders remains worried about the pattern of attacks against members of Sol Rojo and condemns the killing of Luis Armando Fuentes. According to reports provided by local organisations, Oaxaca is the second most dangerous state to carry out human rights work, and is responsible for almost 60% of all recorded attacks against women human

rights defenders in Mexico. Front Line Defenders expresses further concern at the climate of impunity and the lack of a safe environment for human rights defenders in Mexico.

Front Line Defenders urges the authorities in Mexico to:

1. Carry out an immediate, thorough and impartial investigation into the killing of Luis Armando Fuentes, with a view to publishing the results and bringing those responsible to justice in accordance with international standards;
2. Take all necessary measures to guarantee the physical and psychological integrity and security of members of Sol Rojo, in consultation with them;
3. Cease targeting all human rights defenders in Mexico, especially in the state of Oaxaca, and guarantee in all circumstances that they are able to carry out their legitimate human rights activities without fear of reprisals and free of all restrictions, including judicial harassment.