

10 May 2021

Mexico: New attacks against the Indigenous Citizen Council of Nahuatzen

On 7 and 8 May 2021, individuals linked to political parties and the Nahuatzen town council, broke into the Nahuatzen Communal House where they destroyed the facilities and work equipment with stones and sticks, looted and attacked members of **the Nahuatzen Indigenous Council (CCIN)**. The new attacks took place in the context of the process that the P'urhépecha indigenous community is carrying out to exercise their right to self-determination with the renewal of community authorities, coinciding with the political campaigns and the elections called by the state authorities for 6 June 2021.

[The Consejo Ciudadano Indígena de Nahuatzen - the Indigenous Citizens' Council of Nahuatzen \(CCIN\)](#) is an assembly decision-based community government in the state of Michoacán, Mexico, which began a process of gaining autonomous status for the indigenous community in 2015, and has worked to defend the rights of the indigenous people of Nahuatzen. In 2017, the Council was recognized as an indigenous authority by the Electoral Tribunal of the State of Michoacán and the Federal Government of Mexico.

On 7 May, the CCIN held an assembly to prepare for the renewal of their community authorities in accordance to their internal normative systems and not through political party elections. According to information registered by the community, on the same day at 11:30 pm, a group of 30 people, including candidates from MORENA, PRD and PVEM parties, cut the electricity, deactivated the alarms, entered and destroyed the facilities of the Community House of the Citizen Council. The attack lasted up to an hour without members of the National Guard present in the community to stop them.

On 8 May, the CCIN reported the attack to members of the National Guard present in the community but did not get any formal response from the authorities. Hours later, a group of around 80 people with their faces covered returned to the Communal House to attack the community properties and members of the CCIN with sticks and stones. This second attack involved supporters of the PES, PRD, MORENA, PVEM and the Progressive Social Networks parties. The attack resulted in multiple damages to the community, including the total loss of personal property, the archive and memory of the communal government, the theft of money from the communal treasury, the destruction of three cars and damage to the security cameras provided by the Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists that is part of the Ministry of Interior. Members of the community and the CCIN highlight that the damage and looting of the Nahuatzen Communal House, considered a cultural heritage site of the P'urhépecha people, has a profound impact in their culture, memory and cosmovision.

Front Line Defenders reiterates its deep concern regarding the latest events in Nahuatzen, which appear to be directly linked to their legitimate work in favor of the rights of indigenous peoples, in particular in favor of self-determination and for the autonomy of its community, as well as the lack

of favourable responses from the National Guard authorities and State Government authorities. The aggressions appear to be part of a broader strategy that seeks to legitimize and impose an electoral and party political logic that has been rejected by the indigenous community of Nahuatzen.

Front Line Defenders urges the Mexican authorities to:

1. Conduct an impartial investigation into the attacks on communal property, the Nahuatzen Communal House and the members of the Consejo Ciudadano Indígena de Nahuatzen (Indigenous Citizens' Council of Nahuatzen).
2. Bring those responsible to justice, in compliance with international standards;
3. Adopt all necessary measures, in consultation with the human rights defenders, to guarantee their physical and psychological integrity and safety, as well as that of their families and legal representatives;
4. Guarantee that human rights defenders and indigenous communities in Mexico are able to continue their human rights activities without fear of reprisals and without restrictions.