

11 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 Communal House of the **Nahuatzen Indigenous Council (CCIN)**, The individuals destroyed the facilities and work equipment with stones and sticks, looted the premises and attacked members of CCIN. The attacks took place in the context of the process that the P'urhépecha indigenous community is carrying out to exercise its right to self-determination, with the renewal of community authorities, which is coinciding with the political campaigns ahead of the elections scheduled 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 works 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 2021, the CCIN held an assembly to prepare for the renewal of their community authorities in accordance with their internal systems, as opposed to political party elections. According to 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 CCIN'S Communal House. The attack lasted up to an hour, and no members of the National Guard were in the community at the time to intervene.

On 8 May 2021, 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 and attacked the community's 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 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 Ministry of the Interior's Mechanism for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders and Journalists . 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 on 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 advocating for the rights of indigenous peoples, and in particular advocating for the community's right to self-determination and autonomy , as well as the lack of response from the National Guard or State Government authorities. Front Line

Defenders believes the attacks against the indigenous community of Nahuatzen are part of a broader strategy that seeks to legitimize and impose an electoral and political party structure that the community has rejected.

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.