

October 20, 2024

## MEXICO

### Killing of Marcelo Perez Perez, renowned indigenous priest and human rights defender

To the solidary public opinion

To the media

To international human rights organizations

To the Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas, Mexico and the world.

To the three levels of government in Mexico

It was with great pain, sadness and indignation that we learned of the murder of Tzotzil Father Marcelo Perez Perez Perez as he left Mass on Sunday morning, October 20, in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas, in southeastern Mexico. The murder of Father Marcelo, a renowned indigenous priest and human rights defender, is a serious indication of the level of violence and impunity in the state, and should be a turning point in the construction of peace, the reconstruction of the social fabric, and the administration of justice.

From the different places where we are, we want to send an embrace of solidarity to his family, to his parishioners, to civil society and to the Indigenous Peoples of Chiapas who seek peace, and tell them: YOU ARE NOT ALONE. At the same time, we join the voices urgently demanding that the authorities of the three levels of government guarantee truth, justice, and reparation for this murder, in addition to taking all necessary measures to stop the escalation of violence in Chiapas and to address the demands of the Indigenous peoples and communities with whom Father Marcelo walked defending hope and justice.

As we denounced in previous statements, Father Marcelo had received several threats and was at risk as a result of his work in defense of human rights and against violence. For these reasons, since 2015 the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ordered the Mexican State to implement precautionary measures in his favor. In the face of these repeated complaints from local, national and international organizations, the Mexican government was not able to meet their demands and guarantee the necessary security conditions. On the contrary,

the state prosecutor's office went to the extreme of criminalizing him with an arrest warrant, thus strengthening the smear campaign against him.

In the face of these strategies of disinformation and criminalization, it is important to honor his memory and bear witness to his tireless struggle for peace and his commitment to the individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples.

We know that this murder takes place in the midst of the difficult situation of violence that is being experienced in Chiapas, including in the territories of the Zapatista communities. We share this pain and anguish from other territories that also live under siege by organized crime and its armed groups. We understand that the death of a person as brave as Father Marcelo seeks to impose silence and terror. In the face of this, we recognize his courage and determination not to remain silent in the face of the abuse of power by armed groups and complicit governments.

We demand that the Federal Government, in coordination with state and municipal governments and with the broad participation of civil society, especially indigenous peoples, design a comprehensive non-militarized security strategy to contain and address the operation of organized crime groups and armed groups.

In addition, spaces for reflection, dialogue, and training in peacebuilding should be promoted in indigenous communities that so desire, with an emphasis on citizen security, human rights and within a framework of cultural relevance, respecting the collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, including their autonomy and self-determination.

We also join in the demand that all urgent and necessary actions be taken in order to guarantee and protect the life, integrity, and personal safety of the indigenous communities, including the Zapatista Support Base families, preventing the escalation of the situation of violence and risk that has been denounced in various regions of the state of Chiapas.

In the same way, a prompt and adequate investigation must be carried out to identify the persons responsible for this murder, as well as to dismantle and disarm the criminal groups that operate in the different zones and regions where Father Marcelo worked and that have been denounced in various public communications.

Today we bid farewell to Father Marcelo singing in chorus one of the phrases we often sang with him: "We are not afraid! We want our country to be happy with love and freedom".

The indigenous peoples of Chiapas are not alone!

We demand justice for Father Marcelo!

Justice for the Indigenous Peoples!

Sincerely.

**Core Group of *Indigenous Peoples Rights International-IPRI* in Mexico:**

Centro de Derechos Humanos Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas **(Chiapas)**;

Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Montaña Tlachinollan **(Guerrero)**;

Colectivo Emancipaciones **(Michoacán)**;

Colectivo Masehual Siuamej Mosenyolchikauanij, (Mujeres que se apoyan),  
CONAMI, ECMIA **(Puebla)**;

Consultoría Técnica Comunitaria **(Chihuahua)**;

Indignación, Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos, **(Yucatán)**;

Instituto Mexicano para el Desarrollo Comunitario, IMDEC **(Jalisco)**;

Servicios para una Educación Alternativa A.C.- EDUCA **(Oaxaca)**.

Voces del Territorio A.C.