

URGENT ACTION

INDIGENOUS LEADER HEALTH AND LIFE BACK AT RISK

Mapuche Indigenous spiritual leader Machi Celestino Córdova, imprisoned since 2014 in Temuco, central Chile, renewed a hunger strike on Thursday 31 May 2018, after authorities continued denying him access to his ceremonial altar.

Machi Celestino Córdova is a spiritual leader of the Indigenous Mapuche people who has been confined in the Prison Compliance Centre of Temuco, Chile, since his conviction in 2014 in connection to the Luchsinger-Mackay case. He is a Machi, considered the highest religious authority of the Mapuche people.

His role as a Machi requires that he periodically visit his *rewe* (or ceremonial altar) to carry out renewal ceremonies, which are essential to guaranteeing the Mapuches' psychic and physical well-being. However, the Chilean Gendarmerie (prison authorities) have denied his formal requests several times for a 48-hour transfer to his *rewe* for these purposes.

On Thursday 31 May 2018, Machi Celestino Córdova began his second hunger strike of 2018. He had stopped in mid-April a four month first attempt to negotiate with the authorities.

In its 2016 country visit report on Chile, the United Nations Sub-committee on Prevention of Torture expressed concern about the denial of Mapuche detainees' rights to practice their beliefs in accordance with their worldview by, for example, using ancestral methods to heal ailments. It recommended that the Chilean authorities guarantee cultural tradition and customs in accordance with international standards.

1) TAKE ACTION

Write a letter, send an email, call, fax or tweet:

- Calling on the authorities to allow Machi Celestino Córdova to visit his *rewe* for the 48-hours he requires, to ensure that his right to observe his spiritual beliefs, cultural traditions and customs is protected;
- Calling on them to review his prison conditions to further facilitate him and other imprisoned Mapuche people the right to live according to their beliefs, customs and culture while they are imprisoned;
- Calling on them to ensure that any and all medical treatment provided to Machi Celestino Córdova is done with his informed consent and wishes, and that no unwanted treatment or force feeding is executed that may amount to torture and other ill treatment.

Contact these two officials by 16 July, 2018:

Ministry of Justice and Human Rights

Hernán Larraín Fernández

Morandé 107

Santiago de Chile, Chile.

Tel/Fax: +56 (2) 2674 3100

Email: srios@minjusticia.gov.cl

Salutation: Dear Minister

Ambassador Juan Gabriel Valdés,

Embassy of the Republic of Chile

1732 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington DC 20036

Phone: 202 785 1746

Fax: 202 887 5579

Email: echile.euu@minrel.gob.cl

Salutation: Dear Ambassador

2) LET US KNOW YOU TOOK ACTION

[Click here](#) to let us know if you took action on this case! *This is Urgent Action 75.18*

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INDIGENOUS LEADER ON HUNGER STRIKE HOSPITALIZED

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

On 4 January 2013, a group of unknown individuals reportedly entered the property of the elderly couple Vivian Mackay and Werner Luchsinger in the Araucanía Region in central Chile and killed them in an arson attack. Minutes later, police officers detained the Machi Celestino Córdova near the scene, and was later accused of homicide under the Chilean Counter-Terrorism Act. In 2014, the judiciary dismissed the terrorist charges and condemned him to 18 years imprisonment for homicide induced by arson.

Since then, the Machi Celestino Córdova has formally requested a transfer several times to visit his *rewe* or altar, a spiritual action essential for all Machi people. The continuous refusal to grant him permission has caused him several physical afflictions and ailments.

Even though there are records of previous cases where the Gendarmerie has granted the transfer to imprisoned Mapuche people, in the case of the Machi Celestino Córdova, the authorities have proved to be reluctant. They have argued that the Chilean Decree on Prisons does not allow such actions, and that the officials' physical safety could not be guaranteed due to the climate of violence in the area where this religious ceremony would take place.

Amnesty International considers this approach to be inconsistent as well as an infringement of international human rights standards as established in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (art. 27); the International Labour Organization Convention 169 on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (art. 5); and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (arts. 11, 12, 31 and 34).

The Mapuche people are an American Indigenous group that inhabits southern Chile and southwest Argentina. They have been fighting in defence of their ancestral lands throughout Chile's history. Even though the State of Chile recognizes the existence of Mapuche territories, their size has been progressively reduced, which has severely increased tensions in those regions such as the Araucanía, where Mapuche people continue claiming the ownership of their territory and the respect to their cultural identity.

Name: Machi Celestino Córdova

Gender: m

Further Information on UA: 75/18 Index: AMR 22/8522/2018 Issue Date: 04 June 2018