

Guanajuato's Judiciary must guarantee justice in the case of searcher Javier Barajas and his family.

- After two years of criminal proceedings, the state of Guanajuato's Judicial Branch, based in the municipality of Salvatierra, will issue a sentence for the homicide of Javier Barajas Piña, the missing persons' searcher.
- Javier's homicide is one of 18 homicides of missing persons' family members since 2010, related to the exercise of their right to search for their loved ones.

Salvatierra, Guanajuato, as of August 15, 2023.- Two years after the murder of the missing persons' searcher, Javier Barajas Piña, and after two months of the oral trial hearings, the Judicial Branch of the state of Guanajuato with headquarters in Salvatierra has the opportunity to issue a sentence that will bring justice to Javier Barajas Piña's family and that can set a precedent against the impunity that reigns in the attacks and murders of human rights defenders in Mexico.

Francisco Javier Barajas Piña, was a well-known human rights defender in the state of Guanajuato for his work in support of all the families in search of their missing loved ones; this after his sister Guadalupe was forcibly disappeared on February 29, 2020, in Salvatierra, Guanajuato. One year later, in February 2021, Guadalupe Barajas Piña's body was identified in a clandestine grave along with 80 other bodies.

Thanks to the solidarity and hard work of the whole family, Javier and his parents, Javier Barajas and María del Tránsito Piña, continued the search for other missing persons, until May 29, 2021, when Javier was murdered by people linked to his sister's disappearance, causing national and international consternation.

The progress that has been made in the process and investigation of both Javier's murder and his sister Guadalupe's disappearance, have been possible thanks to the family's support of the various collectives in the region and for their work in continuing to demand justice in spite of the risks they have had to face.

Tomorrow, August 16, 2023, a sentence will be passed in the criminal case 1P2821-116 against two people for the aggravated homicide of Javier. After the display of multiple pieces of evidence that support the prosecution's accusation -and not without facing risks in order to be able to actively participate in the trial- a possibility for the Barajas-Piña family to obtain justice and truth in the face of these painful events has opened up.

"Your Honor, I ask you to issue a guilty verdict, this way you will give us a little bit of the justice that we long for so much for my son Francisco Javier Barajas' death. This is not on a whim, much less for revenge, but for justice", expressed María de Tránsito, during her intervention in the plea hearing. "I know perfectly well that this will not bring my son back to life, but there will be truth, your Honor, we have never sought revenge, we only seek and ask for justice", added Javier Barajas.

Javier's murder, according to the National Citizen's Council of the National Search System and journalistic reports, is one of the 18 murders of missing persons' relatives since 2010, which are related to their search work and the exercise of their right to defend human rights: eight of these happened during the last six years.

The risks and threats against family members in search of their missing loved ones have been documented and denounced by various international human rights organizations, like the United Nation's Committee against Enforced Disappearances did in its recent visit to Mexico.

Given the crisis of forced disappearances we are facing in Mexico, the sentence could be an important precedent for the Barajas Piña family, as well as for all the families searching for their loved ones in Guanajuato; therefore, we urge the Judicial Branch of the state of Guanajuato with headquarters in Salvatierra to issue a sentence that takes into considerations international standards and guarantees access to truth and justice.

Thus, the state of Guanajuato's Judicial Branch has the opportunity to create a precedent of the utmost relevance given the context of violence and the crisis of disappearances in Guanajuato and in the country, in cases of threats, risks and homicides of human rights defenders and, in particular, missing persons' relatives exercising their right to search.