

(For Immediate Release)

Historic Trial in Mexico: Indigenous Healer Imprisoned for Ayahuasca is Released

**The resolution of the ayahuasca trial sets a legal precedent of respect
for the rights of Indigenous peoples in Mexico and the world**

Mexico, March 7, 2023 - An acquittal was given in Mexico City in the trial of Don Jose Campos, a 64-year-old indigenous healer from the Peruvian Amazon who was arrested and imprisoned in March of 2022 for traveling with ayahuasca.

Accused of trafficking narcotics, the Indigenous leader was charged with a sentence of 10 to 25 years in prison. This is the first trial in a series of similar cases where people are jailed for months because of the country's official pre-trial detention for alleged "crimes against health."

Natalia Rebollo, lawyer and coordinator of the ICEERS [Ayahuasca Defense Fund \(ADF\)](#), stated that "This first case involved weighing and prioritizing the human rights of Indigenous peoples against a rigid drug control system. This system is not based on human rights nor the ample scientific evidence available, which deserves to be revised."

Trial, Ayahuasca and jurisprudence

ADF lawyers Natalia Rebollo and Jesús Alonso Olamendi have accompanied numerous trials in various parts of the world. They provide evidence, reports, and legal strategies that have established important jurisprudence at the international level. This evidence can be used in trials to demonstrate the legality of ayahuasca and other Indigenous ancestral medicines. In addition, ADF has focused on Mexico in particular, attending six of the eight cases of people serving time in prison for plant medicine.

Dr. José Carlos Bouso, pharmacologist and scientific director of ICEERS, participated as an expert witness in the area of science and pharmacology. He demonstrated that, based on the available scientific evidence, ayahuasca does not pose a risk to public health. "In this trial we have presented evidence on the therapeutic benefits of ayahuasca, coming from both our own research and that of our colleagues. We explained the two investigations we recently published on the effects of ayahuasca for public health in a large population of users," he said.

Rebollo testified about the confusions arising between ayahuasca and DMT and focused on the human rights of Indigenous people who have an ancestral relationship with ayahuasca. "If ayahuasca were regulated in Mexican legislation, the botanical name of two of the plants it is made of would be included in the General Health Law. This is the case with other plants

that are regulated such as peyote (*Lophophora williamsii*) or mushrooms containing psilocybin," she said in statements published in the newspaper *El País*.

Regulating Indigenous Ancestral Medicines

This verdict opens the door to Mexico becoming a pioneer country in the regulation of Indigenous traditional medicines, as recently demonstrated in the [Intercultural Forum on Entheogenic Medicine](#), co-organized by ICEERS and the Mexican Senate.

There are still seven more cases of people awaiting trial in preventive detention for crossing Mexico's borders with ayahuasca. But the Campos trial establishes a precedent in the legal defense of ayahuasca in the country. ICEERS will continue to provide expertise to support these cases and ensure that similar sentences are granted in various countries.

More information:

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