

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL  
QUOTE**

25 July 2018

**Chile: Life of imprisoned Indigenous leader is in imminent danger**

In response to the dry hunger strike that Machi Celestino Córdova, a Mapuche spiritual leader who is currently imprisoned, convicted of homicide induced by arson, has begun in protest of the denial of his rights to health and religious freedom, Erika Guevara-Rosas, Americas Director at Amnesty International, sent an open letter to President Sebastián Piñera today stating:

“Following several months of hunger strike in protest because the Chilean authorities have not let him go to his *rewe*, or ceremonial altar, a sacred place for his people, in order to carry out a renewal ceremony which all Indigenous religious leaders known as machis must undertake periodically in that place, Machi Celestino Córdova is now refusing water, putting his life and health at serious and imminent risk.”

“The fact that he is imprisoned should not prevent the Machi from exercising his right to religious freedom and to practice his beliefs. It is extremely worrying that, according to the information we have received, the Chilean government has not tried to find a solution which would allow them to guarantee his rights, taking into account the right of Indigenous Peoples to preserve their culture, a right which is not lost when imprisoned.”

“The authorities must immediately give the relevant orders to grant Machi Celestino Córdova this request, maintaining a constructive dialogue in good faith and with a view to reaching an agreement, acknowledging that the Machi’s request is of great spiritual and cultural significance to the Mapuche People.”

**For more information or to arrange an interview, please contact:**

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**Further information:**

Chile: Open letter on the situation of the health of Machi Celestino Córdova (Letter, 25 July 2018, only available in Spanish)

<https://www.amnesty.org/es/documents/amr22/8833/2018/es/>

Chile: Indigenous leader health and life back at risk: Machi Celestino Córdova (Campaigns, 4 June 2018)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr22/8522/2018/en/>

Chile: Indigenous leader on hunger strike hospitalized: Machi Celestino Córdova (Campaigns, 19 April 2018)

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/amr22/8251/2018/en/>