

JOEL PAREDES, Argentina

Twenty-nine-year-old ceramicist Joel Paredes lives in Humahuaca, a small town in Jujuy, a northern Argentine province. In June 2023 the local government pushed through changes to the province's constitution, including restrictions on the right to peaceful assembly, as well as measures that may cause damage to the environment, and risk violating Indigenous Peoples' land rights. The changes were approved without consultation with Indigenous Peoples or the wider population.

Jujuy is a province rich in lithium, a metal known as 'white gold' due to its worldwide demand for the creation of batteries. Argentine authorities want to expand lithium exports. But people who live on the land, like Joel and his family, have serious doubts.

Although not Indigenous himself, Joel sympathized greatly and was concerned for the future of his children who would grow up on the land. In support, on the evening of 30 June 2023, Joel joined a protest in Humahuaca square. Alongside hundreds of peaceful demonstrators, Joel played a 'bombo' drum with his band while the City Council discussed the changes in a nearby building. For Joel: *"Our musical instruments are our weapons."*

In the early hours of 1 July, the police arrived at the square and started recklessly firing rubber bullets into the crowd. Joel was hit in his right eye. The injury required surgery, but doctors could not save his sight and Joel is now permanently blind in his right eye. Joel is also left with debilitating nerve pain that impacts his daily life. No one has been held accountable for what happened to Joel and the other protesters.

SHOW JOEL AND HIS FAMILY THAT YOU SUPPORT THEM IN THEIR FIGHT FOR JUSTICE

Send your messages - letters/cards of support to show Joel and his family that they are not alone.

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