

Mexican Baptists in Hidalgo forced from homes

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More than 100 Baptists in Hidalgo State, Mexico, were forced to leave their homes in the villages of Coamila and Rancho Nuevo on April 26.

Village leaders cut off electricity, vandalized and blocked access to some homes and their church, and posted guards at the entry points to the villages, [Christian Solidarity Worldwide](#) reported.

The 139 displaced individuals—including 75 infants and children whose families are members of Great Commission Fundamental Baptist Church—sought refuge in Huejutla de los Reyes, where they are asking the government to intervene on their behalf.

Evangelicals in Huejutla are providing the displaced families with food and water, [evangelicodigital.com](#) reported.

History of violating religious freedom

Rancho Nuevo and Coamila—indigenous Nahuatl-speaking communities in Hidalgo—have a [history of violating the religious freedom of minority faith groups](#) dating back at least to 2015.

The villages are governed under Mexico's Law of Uses and Customs, which recognizes the right of indigenous communities to maintain their cultural and traditional local governance.

The law stipulates local authorities must govern in line with rights guaranteed in the Mexican constitution and international conventions. However, the state and federal government does little to protect minority

rights in those areas, human rights organizations assert.

Women from Hidalgo were among more than two dozen participants in research CSW—a United Kingdom-based human rights organization—conducted in 2021 focusing on religious freedom [violations indigenous religious minority women in Mexico face](#).

The report that grew out of that research, “[Let Her Be Heard](#),” documented violations including harassment, threats and attacks on property, denial of basic services and forced participation in religious activities of the majority Roman Catholic population.

In December 2022, a Baptist woman was hospitalized after being [tied to a tree and beaten](#), and her pastor was assaulted when he tried to intervene.

Pastor detained, members assaulted

The same pastor—Pastor Regelio Hernández Baltazar of Great Commission Fundamental Baptist Church—most recently was taken into custody by authorities on March 25 and detained for 48 hours, along with two other church leaders.

Several weeks ago, village leaders approved the takeover of five plots of land owned by church members, cutting down trees and destroying crops. Three houses were surrounded, and the homeowners were denied entry.

Some members of the church were attacked physically—including with machetes—and villagers repeatedly tried to break down the pastor’s door at night, [evangelicodigital.com reported](#).

The forcible displacement of the Baptists was “entirely preventable, had the government done its job and upheld the law,” said Scott Brewer, chief executive officer of CSW.

“Freedom of religion or belief is guaranteed to all in Mexico, including those in indigenous communities, and yet the attacks on this right in Rancho Nuevo and Coamila have been egregious and ongoing now for almost a decade,” Brewer said.

“CSW calls on Governor Julio Ramón Menchaca Salazar to work to establish a culture of rule of law where the fundamental rights of all are guaranteed, and where swift action is taken to hold those responsible for the criminal acts committed in association with the violations of these rights to account.”