

**Testimony to the US National Administrative Office (NAO) – Public
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I am Salvador García Sánchez. I am 28 years old. I'm single, no kids. I am a sewer. I work in the Puebla and since 2002 I heard about Tarrant and I started working there in April 2, 2002. They asked for my birth certificate, address certificate and my pink slip from the Social Security Administration. I submitted an application and I was taken to my work area.

I work on Area 2, line 6. I had already worked in other material companies that make trousers and, therefore, I was given a job. A woman hired me. Her name was Guadalupe and she asked me to sign a contract for an indefinite time. Three days later, I was given medical coverage and all the benefits except profit sharing.

The company was not very good ventilated. The chairs were not comfortable. We were very tired because we were sitting all day long. They allowed us to go to the bathroom but we were clocked on that and the bathrooms were very few and we had to stand in line. And they were not very well kept. And when we wanted to drink water, we were clocked on that issue as well. The water was very hot. When I entered in, my salary was 660 pesos and then when I started working more and produce 1,250 garments, I was paid 880 pesos.

When we didn't produce enough, we had to stay overtime and we were not paid for that. And they said that if we were not stayed, we were not going to be paid for that week. They were threats but if you didn't stay one day was discounted from your salary. Very few times we were paid overtime and we had to work during holidays as well. We worked 10 hours from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m. Monday through Friday but when the production was not up to par, we had to work on Saturdays and sometimes on Sundays and we were not paid for that. They put pressure on us to work very fast and we had to produce high amount of garments. My job was very risky because we had cuts in our hands due to the machines we work with.

I was cut several times and the only thing that they did was to sent to see a nurse. And the only thing that she did was to wash the hand and give us a pill for the pain. We had to go back and keep on working and even if we were hurt, we had to keep up with production. They were not giving us safety equipment, cover for our mouth and the paint could not be removed. They didn't give us any ear plugs as well.

When I was working there I got sick. I was allergic to moth and some other companies had some problems with the respiratory tract. We were given only half an hour to eat. We were more than 200 people their first shift and we didn't have time to eat well. We had to

go back to work still chewing the food and the food was not good at all. The company accepted people that were 15, 16 years old but everybody in that area needed to work and therefore, the under age go to work falsifying the birth certificate.

We had sexual threats and especially with young ladies. They -- these people caress them and many women were not very happy with this. When I started working there, I met some people that said that we had to have a union to defend the workers because with these we will be benefits not only in our working conditions but the amount of hours that we had to work, but when we tried to get together and submit something to the manager, they said, "If you do something like that, we will fire you". I chose this work because we didn't have any other work resources there and even if you are not very well trained, and I realize that my rights were being violated. I saw a lot of people working there during the say, at night, half the following day, and they were not paid overtime.

We were very tired due to all these violations and they didn't give us the profit sharings and that was the straw that broke the camel back and we decided to go on strike in June to ask for this profit sharing. That stoppage was for three days and we had a coalition for workers to represent us. We went to this local board in Tehuacan to support this coalition. We also submitted a petition with all the complaints from the workers and this board call the company and the coalition. The legal representative from the company, Mr. { } and { } were there to try to reach an agreement with coalition. We had a petition and this was signed by everybody but none of the clauses included in that petition were complied with. And that's why I was very disappointed, because I realized that the authorities were with the patron.

Therefore, we decided to set up an independent union and on July 12th, 2003 we met in Altepexi Puebla, more than 400 workers out of 1100 workers and after that, the people that did not attend said, "We would like to be part of that", and they signed this petition. Therefore, we had more than 700 workers and the name was Single Union for the Workers of Tarrant.

In July 16th, 2003, the company starts firing the six most important leaders that were part of this committee. When we realized about this, the workers decided to stop work that specific day but the company threatened that we would be fired if we didn't go back to work, therefore, we went back to work. July 28th, 2003, one newspaper published an article saying that Tarrant was going to fire more than 4500 workers from Ajalpan and Tehuacan and therefore, on August 4th, 2003, we decided to go from Ajalpan which is where the company is located, to the municipal palace in Tehuacan and with the local board. When the company realized who participated in that activities, the leaders were fired on August 7th, 2003.

That day we asked for the union to be registered before the local Conciliation and Arbitration Board in Puebla. After that, we went to Casa { } and we talked to we talked to the { } and he promised that he was going to give us his support. We talked to { }, the President of the local Board, { }, with the media and with somebody from the Labor

Secretary of the City of Mexico and we also went to the Mexico City office of Tarrant and { }.

We also contacted some of the companies that we made garments for but Levi's was the only one that answered. They wanted to do something for us but they said that they would not complain with the Levi's work which allows for the association. But we had somebody come in and check to see whether these violations were true or not. That group is called Verite. And they investigated or tried to see what happened inside the installations but we have not heard about the results.

The Center Portia Jores (ph) has been advised and I was hired August 12th along with 100 other workers that are part of this committee. Of course I was effected negatively. I come from Vera Cruz and I went to Tehuacan with my family five years ago trying to find a job because where I come from, we have no work whatsoever. Here in Tehuacan we have to pay rent, we all work, and when I was fired it was very hard because my family didn't have enough money with what my father and my sisters brought.

We were fired unjustly. However, everything that we did was not useful because October 6th, 2003 all the members of the committee went to the board to see what our petition's response was and we were surprised to hear that the union had not been accepted. This is what { } said. He is the General Secretary of the Conciliation and Arbitration Board of Puebla. He gave us some arguments that something about the local law and the federal law and we asked for the decision of this board to be nullified and to acknowledge our union.

This we were effected because everybody that participated in this fight were very disappointed when the authorities were with the company and not with us and we -- and our rights were violated. It was very difficult. We had been without our salary for four months. It was very sad because we had a lot of single mothers. Some of them carried their kids to the meetings because they had nobody to leave them with and they had to ask for some money to be able to feed their kids and therefore, some of the workers wanted to leave. The company said, "You have to sign that you agreed to leave", and they told us that due to us, the company was going to close down.

{ } said that we had to renounce of our request to have a union. They said, "If you don't sign, you're not going to get your money", and they signed. They had been without a salary for many months, we had a lot of debts. I and two other people did not sign. After that in February the company closed down and fired more than 500 workers who were still working at the company. They gave them a minimum salary that was not what the law agreed upon. And it's very difficult for me to get a job right now because we are part of a black list that has been distributed to other companies and they said that we are agitators because we request our rights. I have been out of a job for more than seven months and I'm very concerned that the government does not even hear of our complaints. We have no idea whom else to turn to, to be able to get some justice in this. We ask you to press Mr. { } not to oppose the unions and talk to the local arbitration

board in Puebla especially, { }, President and the General Secretary, { } not to be as corrupt and not to defend the company instead of defending us.

We ask all the companies that go and work in our country to respect the Mexican law, especially the freedom of association and to press the President of Mexico, { } and { }, the Social Security Administration, to respect the rights of all the workers in the country, to respect our right to organize and have a dignified salary and therefore, we can have a dignified live. Thank you very much.