

International solidarity letter

September 19, 2007

Letter to workers at Vaqueros Navarra – September 19 union

Dear Brothers and Sisters:

On this September 19, the anniversary of the birth of one of Mexico's most important democratic unions, we the undersigned trade union, women's, faith, and human and labour rights organizations are writing to express our solidarity with the workers at the Vaqueros Navarra factory in Tehuacan, Puebla, Mexico in your struggle for decent wages and working conditions and respect for your rights at the workplace.

You are fighting for one of the most fundamental human rights at work – the right to form or join a union of your own free choice and to bargain collectively without any interference by your employer or the government.

We have received disturbing reports that management at Vaqueros Navarra has been violating that right by harassing, threatening, dismissing and attempting to intimidate workers into giving up their struggle.

On this important anniversary of democratic unionism in Mexico, we join with you in declaring that no employer, including management at Vaqueros Navarra, has the right to interfere with their employees' decision about what union they want to affiliate with. They have no right to harass, threaten or intimidate or dismiss their employees for exercising this fundamental democratic right of workers.

Over the coming weeks and months, our organizations will be closely monitoring events in Tehuacan to ensure that there is no further interference by your employer or the state government with your democratic rights. We stand ready to respond to requests for solidarity if such action is needed.

We call on management at Vaqueros to respect your right to be represented by the union of your choice and to cease all efforts to interfere with that right.

We call on the government of the State of Puebla to set a date for a union representation vote (recuento) at the earliest opportunity and to hold that vote by secret ballot and in a neutral location so that the workers at Vaqueros Navarra can exercise their democratic right without external interference.

We call on the brands that buy products from Vaqueros Navarra and other Grupo Navarra factories to clearly communicate to the employer that they want an end to any discrimination or harassment of workers who want to be represented by a democratic union. We urge them to continue to place orders with the factory so that the workers continue to have employment, but to also ensure that they are treated with dignity and respect.

We call on all trade union organizations in the State of Puebla to support and respect the rights of the Vaqueros Navarra workers to be represented by the union of their choice, and to not attempt to interfere with or attempt to subvert that right.

We know you are facing incredible odds. We stand with you and hope you will be able to maintain your unity and determination to continue the struggle until your rights are fully respected.

We look forward to receiving good news that you have won your important battle and have achieved a democratic union and have freely negotiated with your employer for improved wages and working conditions and a better life for yourselves and your family members.

Your victory will be an historic precedent for all workers in the state of Puebla and other parts of Mexico where workers' rights are still being denied by corrupt governments and abusive employers.

The workers united will never be defeated. Venceremos.

In Solidarity

MEXICO

- Centro de Promoción y Defensa de los Derechos Humanos Laborales (CEPRODEHL), Yucatán
- Centro de Apoyo a la Trabajadora de la Laguna (CETRAMAC)
- Servicio, Desarrollo y Paz, A.C. (SEDEPAC), Coahuila
- Comité Fronterizo de Obrer@s (CFO)
- Mujeres Trabajadoras Unidas, A.C. (MUTUAC)
- Centro Nacional de Comunicación Social, A.C. (CENCOS)
- Centro de Investigación Laboral y Asesoría Sindical, A.C. (CILAS)
- Proyecto de Derechos Económicos, Sociales y Culturales (PRODESC)
- Red Mexicana de Acción frente al Libre Comercio (RMALC)

CANADA

- Canadian Labour Congress (CLC)
- Basilian Centre for Peace and Justice
- Communications, Energy and Paper Workers' Union (CEP)
- Maquila Solidarity Network (MSN)
- Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC)
- United Steelworkers Union (USW - Canada)
- Annie Labaj, Director, International Department, Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW)
- Marie-Noëlle Roy, Coordinator, Coalition québécoise contre les ateliers de misère (CQCAM)
- Francine Néméh, Coordinator, Centre international de solidarité ouvrière (CISO)
- KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives
- Anne-Marie Jackson, Jesuit Forum for Social Faith and Justice
- Suzanne Rumsey, Coordinator, Latin America/Caribbean, PWRDF, Anglican Church of Canada
- Consejo Arquidicocesano de Toronto, Organización Canadiense Desarrollo y Paz

EUROPE

- Labour Behind the Label Coalition, UK
- War on Want, England
- Christliche Initiative Romero, Germany
- Campaña Ropa Limpia, Spain

USA

- United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE)
- International Labour Rights Forum (ILRF)
- US/Labor Education in the Americas Project (US/LEAP)
- Sweatshop Watch
- United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)
- Campaign for Labor Rights (CLR)
- SweatFree Communities
- UNITE HERE

LATIN AMERICA

- Asociación Servicios de Promoción Laboral (ASE-PROLA), Costa Rica
- Equipo de Monitoreo Independiente de Honduras (EMIH), Honduras
- Fundación Laboral Dominicana (FLD), Dominican Republic
- Asociación Nacional de Trabajadores del Sistema General de Salud (ASOSIASALUD), Colombia
- Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS), Colombia

ASIA

- National Garment Workers Federation, Bangladesh
- Export Processing Zone Workers Center, Bangladesh
- Karmojibi Nari, Bangladesh
- Womyn's Agenda for Change, Cambodia

AFRICA

- Lesotho Garment and Allied Workers Union (LECAWU), Lesotho
- Factory Workers' Union (FAWU), Lesotho
- Bahlakoana Shaw Lebakae, President, Lesotho Congress of Democratic Unions (LECODU), Lesotho

INTERNATIONAL

- Lydia Alpizar Durán, Executive Director, Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)
- Clean Clothes Campaign - International Secretariat