

INTERNATIONAL
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June 17, 2010

The Honorable Barack Obama
President, United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

President Obama:

This letter is a follow up to my April 22, 2010 letter (enclosed) to which you have not yet responded. In that letter, I raised an issue of great concern to the International Longshore and Warehouse Union and labor worldwide. Since April, the Costa Rican Government, now lead by President Laura Chinchilla, is further along in implementing a carefully formulated port privatization program, a so called "port reform" effort, in the Ports of Limón and Moín that has as a central objective the complete exclusion and ultimate elimination of SINTRAJAP, the dockworkers union in those ports.

The conduct of the Arias/Chinchilla regime in Costa Rica is illegal on all fronts. The Government of Costa Rica has deliberately violated and failed to enforce its own labor laws. The Government of Costa Rica has completely disregarded its commitment to "respect, promote and realize" core workers' rights, as outlined in the International Labour Organization's (ILO) Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work. Moreover, the Costa Rican Government's deliberate violation of its own labor laws and the complete disregard of its commitment to the ILO Declaration has occurred, and continues to occur, after the Costa Rican Government became a party to the Dominican Republic – Central American Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA), which entered into force between the United States and Costa Rica on January 1, 2009.

Below is a partial list of the actions that the Costa Rican Government has taken against SINTRAJAP that have been condemned worldwide:

1. Removal of the democratically elected leadership of SINTRAJAP and imposition of a government-backed employer-run board of union directors;
2. Freezing of the Union's bank accounts;
3. Militarization of the ports;
4. Police occupation of the Union's offices; and



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5. Consummation of an unconstitutional multi-million dollar deal, in essence a bribe, with the government-backed employer-run board of union directors.

Other ports in Costa Rica have been privatized under similar "port reform" efforts, and the results have been devastating. In 2006, the program of "port reform" currently underway in the Atlantic Ports of Limón and Moín was carried out in the Pacific Port of Caldera. That "port reform" effort led to the near complete elimination of the union, increased poverty, increased unemployment, a reduction in salaries by two thirds, decreased revenues for public services, and negligible investment in infrastructure.

While labor unions, their affiliates worldwide, and members of the United States Congress have expressed great concern about the current labor rights situation in Costa Rica, your office has remained silent. We again ask for your response and immediate attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

Robert McEllrath
International President

Enclosure

cc: Hillary Clinton, United States Secretary of State
Rahm Emanuel, White House Chief of Staff
Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House
Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO
Tom Dufresne, President, Canada ILWU
Wesley Furtado, International Vice President, Hawaii ILWU
Richard Hughes, President, International Longshoremen's Association
Harold Daggett, Executive Vice President, International Longshoremen's Association
David Cockroft, General Secretary, International Transportation Workers' Federation
Antolín Goya, General Coordinator, International Dockworkers' Council
Paddy Crumlin, National Secretary, Maritime Union of Australia
Alan Coté, President, Inlandboatmen's Union of the Pacific
Cecilio Lepe Bautista, General Secretary, Federación Nacional de Trabajadores de Transportes y Maniobras Marítimas y Terrestres
Timothy Brown, President, International Organization of Masters, Mates & Pilots
Gunnar Lundeborg, President, Sailors' Union of the Pacific
Michael Sacco, President, Seafarers International Union of North America
Don Keefe, President, Marine Engineers Beneficial Association SINTRAJAP