

Geneva, 2 December 2016

Mr. Woong-ki Kim  
Chairman  
SAE-A Trading Co., Ltd  
Daechi-Dong  
Seoul, Seoul, 06181  
South Korea

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## Request to intervene with the government of Nicaragua to ensure all charges are dropped against those accused in the SAE-A Tecnotex trial

Dear Mr. Woong-ki Kim

I am writing on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industrial-all-union.org), which represents 50 million workers in the manufacturing, mining and energy sectors, to call on SAE-A Tecnotex to intervene with the government of Nicaragua to ensure the unconditional release of twelve people found guilty last week in connection with a conflict that broke out at your factory in June of this year. The sentencing, which is due to take place on Friday 2 December, could include up to three years' imprisonment.

On 27 June, SAE-A Tecnotex's firing of two union leaders for demanding respect for union rights and improved working conditions sparked a work stoppage by some 3,000 workers inside the factory. The Esfuerzo Democrático union belongs to our affiliate the textile federation FESITEX.

The workers' demands included the provision of clean drinking water and realistic production targets, as well as good faith bargaining to renew the collective agreement.

Workers claimed that tensions surrounding these issues had been growing for some time, and that the firing of the two leaders was the straw that broke the camel's back.

In a move never before seen in Nicaragua's free trade zones, riot police were sent in to the factory to quell the disturbance. The police then arbitrarily and indiscriminately detained a dozen workers who happened to be in or around the factory at the time, including several workers from other factories in the free trade zone who had gathered peacefully outside the factory or were simply passing by, as well as a taxi driver who had nothing to do with the protest. One of those detained was underage.

The twelve were held for five days and, despite reports that the company had dropped the charges against them, were later arraigned for trial on charges brought by the public prosecutor. While awaiting trial those employed at SAE Tecnotex have not been able to work to support themselves and their families, which has further aggravated an already very difficult situation.

The trial took place last week. SAE-A Tecnotex's human resources' manager Fanny Noguera testified against the workers at the trial, and two of the company's security guards appeared as injured parties. It also appears that SAE-A Tecnotex upheld charges of 'money-lending' against the two union leaders.

This unprecedented decision comes at a crucial time. Indeed, just one week before the start of the trial, the countries of Central America finalized a Free Trade Agreement with South Korea. Once ratified by the Congresses of the respective countries, the agreement is expected to result in a significant increase in Korean investment in the region. This unjust sentencing of workers in a Korean-owned company for doing nothing more than defending their rights sets an appalling precedent and is not a good way to usher in the new trade agreement between your two countries.

I therefore call on you to drop the charges brought by your company against the two union leaders as well as to urge the authorities to drop all other charges.

I also call upon SAE-A Tecnotex to ensure the accused workers who are employed at SAE-A Tecnotex receive their unpaid wages, to negotiate in good faith to renew the expired collective agreement, as well as to open a dialogue with union leaders to resolve the underlying issues that sparked the conflict.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Valter Saches". The signature is stylized and written over a light blue rectangular background.

Valter Saches  
General Secretary