

Geneva, 15 March 2018

Gary Schultz
CEO
Edwards Garment Co.
4900 S 9th Street
Kalamazoo MI 49009
USA
gschultz@edwardsgarment.com

IndustriALL Global Union calls on Edwards Garment to reinstate 32 workers at its Haitian supplier Interamerican Wovens (IW)

Dear Mr. Schultz,

I am writing this letter to you as the General Secretary of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industriall-union.org), which represents more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors throughout the world, including Haiti, to urge your company to intervene with its Haitian supplier Interamerican Wovens (IW) to ensure the reinstatement with back-pay of 32 workers unfairly dismissed following strike action last year in breach of ILO standards on freedom of association.

As you are no doubt aware, on 19 May of last year, in the wake of a dramatic increase in the cost of living, workers in 22 garment factories in Port-au-Prince - including IW - went on strike in support of demands for an increase in the minimum wage from 300 to 800 gourdes per day.

As a result of the strike, union leaders and workers in five factories – including IW – were dismissed. At IW, 32 workers were dismissed, including 11 union leaders of our affiliate GOSTTRA-CTSP.

Two of the five factories subsequently reinstated the dismissed workers. In spite of repeated calls to do so, IW is one of three factories that has refused to reinstate the dismissed workers.

Interamerican Wovens is participating in the Better Work programme, a comprehensive programme bringing together all levels of the garment industry to improve working conditions and respect of labour rights for workers and boost the competitiveness of apparel businesses. Better Work is a collaboration between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Finance Corporation (IFC), a member of the World Bank Group.

Following requests from local stakeholders, Better Work agreed to carry out an investigation into the circumstances surrounding the dismissals. In October, it released a report outlining its findings and setting out a series of recommendations (attached).

The report notes that during the course of the strike, the company called in two labour inspectors who stated that the union leaders had intimidated their fellow workers into going on strike.

Significantly, however, the Better Work report points out that the company chose to call in two regular inspectors which whom it had had prior dealings, rather than calling in inspectors from the garment industry 'task force' which has received intensive training as part of the Better Work's capacity building programme for the Labour Ministry. None of the workers interviewed by Better Work as part of its special investigation corroborated the allegations of coercion. The union confederation CTSP has since brought corruption charges against the two labour inspectors in question.

The Better Work report also notes that the company notified the labour authorities about the dismissals on May 22 – four days *before* the two labour ministers filed their report.

As a result of its findings, Better Work recommends the reinstatement of the 32 workers in question with payment of back wages.

I would also like to take this opportunity to remind you that ILO standards are complemented by the OECD Guidelines on Multinationals, which corporations from OECD countries are expected to abide by in their business operations worldwide, as well as the OECD Due Diligence Guidance for Responsible Supply Chains in the Garment and Footwear Sector, which are aimed at avoiding and addressing the potential negative impacts in global supply chains.

I am writing now to urge you to insist that your supplier immediately reinstate the 32 workers with payment of lost wages.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely yours,



Valter Sanches
General Secretary