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Worker Delegate of Finland

Committee on the Application of Standards, Mexico Conention Nr. 87

Madam Chairperson,

National legislation should never be used as an excuse to undermine ILO core labour standards. Companies should respect same core labour standards where ever they operate. All workers have the fundamental right to join the union of their own choosing without any interference or harassment and have right to negotiate collectively.

Protection contracts have been addressed by the spokesperson and other members of my group. Let me give you following examples from a Finnish multinational autoparts company operating in Mexico. It employes currently 7000 workers producing wire harnesses for the vehicle market for many of the major auto companies.

In this company workers did learn of the existence of a protection contract only when they sought to organise an independent union at the factory. The management denied that request and referred to the existing protection contract.

The independent union, Los Mineros, asked the labour authorities for an election to allow the workers to choose their union. The authorities delayed this election for a year, giving the company and the protection union time to pressure the workers, especially with threats to close the plant. The independent union narrowly lost the election.

Immediately following the election, the company dismissed more than one hundred persons among them the entire executive committee of Los Mineros. All the union observers in the election were among the dismissed persons. The workers were called individually and told to sign a "voluntary" resignation letter. Federal Labour Officials were present and encouraged the workers to sign.

Ten workers did not sign the resignation letters and filed legal demands for reinstatement. A Court decision was issued for four workers this spring. After more than two years, the Court ordered their reinstatement. The Court ordered that they receive back pay from the date of their illegal dismissal. The other six are still waiting for a decision.

To my knowledge, the company has not reinstated the four workers. Instead it has offered to pay them off, which the workers do not accept. Workers at the company supplier plant in Piedras Negras reported that they were forced to sign a letter to Ford saying conditions in the plant were good.

To conclude Madam Chairperson,

Governments must ensure that companies respect core labour standards when they operate in their country and in their global supply chains. National legislation should never be used as an excuse to undermine core labour standards. Workers have the right to join the union of their own choosing without any interference or harassment.

I urge the Government of Mexico to fulfill its obligations and to ensure that all companies including Finnish companies operating in Mexico respect freedom of association according to the Convention Nr 87.