

Action Alert

Mexican Troops Break Copper Strike in Cananea

“A Reign of Terror” against Workers,” says Steelworkers’ Leo Girard

On Sunday June 6th Mexican President Felipe Calderon sent heavily armed federal riot police to break the nearly three year long strike by members of the Mexican Mineworkers’ Union against mining giant Grupo Mexico in Cananea, Sonora, just 30 miles south of the border with Arizona.



Cananea is now occupied by about 3,000 troops and 500 additional police. They took the mine using tear gas, and, according to residents, gassed, beat, and shot at miners and their family members in the union hall. There were fires around town, and warrants were issued for the arrest of several

union leaders, including Section 65 Secretary General Sergio Tolano Lizarraga.

The 1200 copper miners had been on strike for almost three years over mine safety, Grupo Mexico’s many contract violations, and the Mexican government’s persecution of National Miners and Metalworkers Union (SNTMMSRM) president Napoleon Gomez Urrutia. Just recently the Mexican Congress appointed a commission and gave it 30 days to investigate and make recommendations to resolve the dispute. Cananea produces about 40% of Mexico’s copper.

Despite an alarming record of labor repression, President Calderon was warmly welcomed at a state dinner at the White House by President Obama just three weeks ago. It is clear that Calderon wants to eliminate the few rights Mexican workers have left, including their right to strike.

Cananea was the birthplace of the Mexican Revolution, don’t let it be the grave. Tell Calderon that you object, and tell Congress and the White House to tell Calderon the same. Following are sample letters to Calderon and to US officials. Feel free to modify them. Also please write letters to the editor and on blogs and let your local Mexican consulate know you protest.

Also the Congress's Appropriations Committee, Foreign Operations subcommittee is currently considering another \$310 million in funding for Plan Mexico or Plan Merida which has already sent \$1.4 billion to Mexico for training and equipment of security forces over the last three years.

For more background, see <http://bit.ly/ciOdFu> and <http://bit.ly/b5wXNx> The author of this alert visited Cananea with a labor educator and student delegation May 15-19.

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ACTIONS NEEDED – WRITE LETTERS TO THE FOLLOWING

#1 to President Felipe Calderon Hinojosa
Los Pinos, Mexico D.F.

felipe.calderon@presidencia.gob.mx

Fax: 011-52 55 50934901

Dear President Calderon:

I am outraged by the actions of your government in breaking the strike by copper miners in Cananea, Sonora. This violent repression of the union, the issuing of warrants for the arrest of its leaders, and your failure to seek a peaceful negotiated settlement to the conflict is a violation of the Federal Labor Law, the Mexican Constitution, and the Conventions of the International Labor Organization.

We strongly urge you to reverse this course and instead take action to respect workers' rights to bargain, to cancel your arrest warrants, to release all imprisoned workers and citizens of Cananea, and to withdraw your troops from the mine and the city.

Your name and organization (if any)

#2 Please send letters to any or all of the following:

1. President Barack Obama, The White House, Washington, D.C. 202-456-1414
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/contact>
2. State Department - <http://bit.ly/cJbCqk>
3. Your Senators and Congressperson - <http://www.congress.org/congressorg/directory/congdir.tt>
4. Rep. Howard L. Berman, chairman House Foreign Relations Committee (202) 225-4695
<http://www.house.gov/berman/contact/index.shtml> also look at list of members
<http://foreignaffairs.house.gov/members.asp> to see if any are from your state
5. Sen. John Kerry, chair, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, (202) 224-2742, email
<http://kerry.senate.gov/contact/> List of committee members at <http://foreign.senate.gov/>
6. House Appropriations Subcommittee on State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs which is considering additional money for security (military and police) in Mexico. Find members at <http://bit.ly/axPi4E> Chair is Nita Lowey 202-225-6506, 202-225-0546 (fax). Send email to her staffperson: jennie.munoz@mail.house.gov

#3 Please send copies of correspondence to info@crossbordnetwork.org

Dear _____

On June 6th Mexican President Felipe Calderon sent 3,000 troops and 500 police into Cananea Sonora to break the copper miners' strike. They committed violent repression on the workers and their families and have by their actions essentially obliterated the right to strike in Mexico. Given the billion plus dollars the US has given the Mexican security forces in the last few years; it's a good guess that this was done with US taxpayer dollars.

I have already written to President Calderon and am now asking you to cut all military aid to Mexico, deny the pending request for more aid and communicate in the strongest possible terms that respect for the rights of Mexican workers is an essential component of the relationship between our two countries.

Your name and organization