



Ken Neumann  
National Director / Directeur national

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November 23, 2017

**Via email: [chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca](mailto:chrystia.freeland@international.gc.ca)**

Honourable Chrystia Freeland  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1N 0G2

Dear Minister Freeland,

We write to express the grave concern of our union over the deteriorating labour and human rights conditions in Mexico, and to urge you to address this situation in the context of NAFTA negotiations.

Workers of the Media Luna mining company, a subsidiary of the Canadian firm Torex Gold Resources, have been on strike since November 3 in the Mexican state of Guerrero. The workers have demanded that the company withdraw recognition from the CTM (Confederation of Mexican Workers) and recognize the National Union of Mine, Metal, Steel and Related Workers ("Los Mineros"). Last week the Mexican government sent 130 Federal Police to occupy the mine site. "With the assistance of the USW, the company and the Mineros began discussions and last Friday and agreed to ask the Mexican government to expedite an election to allow workers to vote for the union of their choice. But on Saturday, a unit of "community police" killed two local residents who had participated in protests against the mine. Members of this unit, identified as affiliated with the CTM, were arrested but then released. The Governor of Guerrero publicly expressed concern not over the murder of workers, but the disruption of foreign investment. The workers continue their strike, but there are fears that there will be more attacks against the strikers.

The USW calls on the Canadian government to immediately convene the Mexican authorities, the employer and Los Mineros to reach a solution to this conflict that avoids further violence. We emphasize that the current collective bargaining agreement between Media Luna and the CTM was reached without consultation with or any ratification vote by the workers. Last week the company and the Mineros agreed to jointly ask the Mexican labour ministry (STPS) to hold an expedited election to allow the workers to decide democratically which union they want to represent them. Such elections are frequently scheduled with less than a week's notice.

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United Steel, Paper and Forestry, Rubber, Manufacturing, Energy, Allied Industrial and Service Workers International Union  
Syndicat international des travailleurs unis de la métallurgie, du papier et de la foresterie, du caoutchouc,  
de la fabrication, de l'énergie, des services et industries connexes

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800-234-av, Eglinton Ave. E., Toronto ON Canada M4P 1K7 · 416-487-1571 · 416-482-5548 (Fax/Télé.) · [www.usw.ca](http://www.usw.ca)

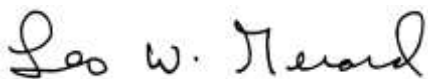
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These tragic events underscore the need for a more forceful approach by the Canadian government to the issue of labour rights in Mexico in the current NAFTA negotiations. While Canada asserts that it has "put forward the strongest, most progressive labour provisions ever put forward by Canadian trade negotiators," it is far from clear how these provisions will actually deter the common practice of employers signing collective agreements with employer-dominated unions (known as "protection contracts"), without the knowledge or consent of the workers, as in the case of Media Luna. Mexico's recent Constitutional reform partially addresses this problem, but it appears that draft legislation to implement this reform in the Federal Labor Law is now being significantly weakened in the Congress. Without requiring enforceable measures to guarantee that workers are free to choose their representatives, implemented prior to the effective date of a new NAFTA, there is little possibility for improving freedom of association and closing the wage gap that has driven the relocation of Canadian jobs.

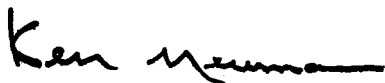
This most recent case of anti-worker behavior by a Canadian mining company also underscores the need for an extractive industries Ombudsperson to ensure transparency and accountability in overseas operations of Canadian companies.

Finally, we reiterate our request that you meet with Napoleón Gomez Urrutia, the leader of Los Mineros, along with USW leadership, to discuss the Canadian government's approach to issues of labor rights in Mexico.

Sincerely,



Leo W. Gerard  
International President



Ken Neumann  
National Director for Canada

c.c.: Napoleón Gomez Urrutia, Los Mineros