

Via fax: 011 503 2243 7857/9930/9947 Sr. Mauricio Funes President of El Salvador	Via fax: 011 503 2523 7402 Sr. Romeo Benjamin Barahona Attorney General of El Salvador
Via fax: 202 458 3650 Sr. Forentin Meléndez El Salvador Member of Inter-American Commission on Human Rights	

February 13, 2010

Dear Sirs:

We are outraged at the assassination on January 15 of **Victoriano Abel Vega**, General Secretary of the Union of Workers and Municipal Employees of the Municipality of Santa Ana (SITRAMSA). He was murdered on his way to San Salvador to attend a meeting with several other trade unionists in preparation for a complaints procedure concerning the unfair dismissal of several employees of the municipality of Santa Ana in breach of Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labor Organization (ILO). These conventions cover the right to form unions and bargain collectively. He had received previous death threats in connection with his role as a trade union leader and his denunciation of the dismissals of his fellow employees.

In 2006, El Salvador ratified both ILO Convention 87 (Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, established in 1948) and ILO Convention 98 (Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, established in 1949). Early this month, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) issued a report on El Salvador labor standards for the World Trade Organization (WTO) General Council. According to the report, workers face several difficulties when wishing to set up a trade union. Before establishing a union, workers must obtain prior authorization and follow complex procedures. Registration of legitimate unions is regularly refused on narrow procedural grounds. In its list of twenty-three recommendations at the end of the report, the ITUC urges that: 1-the government put its legislation into conformity with ILO Convention 87 and 98, and 2- All workers in the public sector have the right to form and join a trade union and to bargain collectively.

We are aware that El Salvador remains a highly dangerous place to be a trade unionist. The tragic death of Victoriano Abel Vega highlights the difference between laws on paper and their actual use to benefit working people.

We therefore **strongly urge** that you

- immediately launch a thorough inquiry into the murder of Victoriano Abel Vega, publish the results and bring those responsible to justice;
- ensure that the provisions of ILO conventions 87 and 98 are strictly enforced and the rights of trade unionists protected.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai
Coordinator

Copies: ITUC: International Trade Union Confederation ~ via fax: 011 322 201 5815
Robert Blau, Charge d'Affaires, US Embassy to El Salvador ~ fax: 011-503-2501-2154
Francisco Altshul, Salvadoran Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202-234-3834
René Figueroa, Minister of the Interior and Governance ~ via fax: 011-503-2281-5959
Douglas Kraft, El Salvador Desk at U.S. State Dept. ~ via fax: 202-647-2597
Dinah Shelton, US member of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202-458-3650
US Senators Brown & Voinovich and US Representatives Bocchieri, Fudge, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Ryan, Space, Sutton, Wilson ~ via email

ITUC1/20ElSalvador

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: