

ActNOW

Mexico: Human rights defender kidnapped and tortured

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A LabourStart campaign in partnership with “Los Mineros”, the National Union of Mine and Metal Workers (Sindicato Nacional de Trabajadores Mineros, Metalúrgicos y Similares de la República Mexicana -SNTMMSRM, the principal union representing workers in the mining and steel industries at both multinational and domestic employers in Mexico. As a result of its militancy and political independence, the union has faced a systematic campaign of repression over the past six years. The union’s General Secretary operates from exile in Canada.

Mexican human rights defender, José Enrique Morales Montaña, of the Center of Support for Workers (CAT) in Puebla, Mexico was kidnapped and physically tortured on May 15, 2012 as he was headed to the Local Labor Board in the city of Puebla to accompany a group of textile workers who were fighting a case against a factory in the region. His captors kept a gun pressed to his head for extended periods of time, and threatened to kill him and the other members of the CAT. In the evening of the same day, they left him on an abandoned highway to Veracruz, and stole his cell phone and backpack. Mr. Morales suffered serious injuries. The next morning, Blanca Velázquez, director of the CAT, received a message from Mr. Morales Montaña’s stolen cell phone stating: “You will die, bitch.” Since the CAT’s formation in 2001, they have successfully organized multiple autoparts, maquila, and textile factories ousting protection unions and replacing them with democratic, independent unions. CAT’s organizing work has brought negative attention from actors in Mexico who oppose their efforts, which has lead to a series of recent attacks. In 2010, CAT’s offices were burglarized and staff was threatened via email and threats painted on the office walls.

After intense advocacy efforts, CAT’s staff received protective measures from the state of Puebla, which were removed without explanation or any investigation into the threats one year later. The Mineros union of Mexico who has worked closely with the CAT for several years calls for an international campaign of solidarity to guarantee the lives, physical integrity and security of José Enrique Morales Montaña and the other members of the CAT who have continued to fight for worker and human rights in Mexico.

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http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=1393&src=lsmm

Letter:

I am writing to express my worry and outrage about the recent kidnapping and physical torture of José Enrique Morales Montaña, of the Center of Support for Workers (CAT) in Puebla, Mexico. Human and labor rights defenders in Mexico should not be subject to a climate of harassment or vulnerable to physical attacks for exercising their right to defend the human rights of others. For this reason, we call on you to guarantee the lives, physical integrity and security of José Enrique Morales Montaña and the other members of the CAT. We also implore the relevant authorities to effectively comply with its obligation to investigate and sanction those responsible for this attack and the continual threats with regard to the highest international standards. This investigation must result in the identification of those responsible for the kidnapping, beating, and threats against Mr. Enrique Morales Montaña and the other members of the CAT and should proceed to sentencing in compliance with the law. I stand in solidarity with those in Mexico defending human and labor rights and look forward to a swift resolution to this injustice.
