Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
United States Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary of State Clinton,

As members of the International Workers Rights Caucus we would like to take this opportunity to express great concern about the current labor rights situation in Costa Rica. We respectfully request your assessment of the apparently deliberate destruction of SINTRAJAP, a legitimate port workers' union in Costa Rica. It is our understanding that SINTRAJAP is ostensibly being illegally and unconstitutionally targeted by the country's government, which seems determined to break the union in order to speed through the privatization of the ports of Puerto Limon and Puerto Moin.

JAPDEVA, the state-owned agency that administers the ports of Costa Rica, seized control of the union by removing the democratically elected leadership and replacing them with government-backed directors. Further, we understand that the new directors have been working to transform SINTRAJAP into an undemocratic, employer-run trade union. The government of Costa Rica has reportedly frozen SINTRAJAP's bank accounts, funnelled current membership dues away from the legitimate union, and has made attempts to oust SINTRAJAP from their wholly owned building by threatening to withhold essential services like gas and electricity. In a worrisome sign of escalation, we understand that the Costa Rican government has now stationed visibly armed police on the docks in what appears to be a measure of intimidation. These are extremely troubling signs.

We are troubled by the reports of these recent steps taken by the Costa Rican government and ask that you express these concerns immediately to your counterparts in Costa Rica. These actions are leading to a serious climate of repression and alarming human rights situation. This type of government intervention in the SINTRAJAP Port Workers' Union appears to be unlawful and inconsistent with Costa Rica's historic commitment to democracy and human rights.

As members of the International Workers Rights Caucus we find the reports of these continuing labor rights abuses and the lack of corrective action on part of the Costa Rican government to be very troubling. Costa Rica needs to comply with its obligations to the U.S. and the International Labour Organization (ILO). We need to see serious and sustained political will by the Costa Rican government, which so far seems not to be forthcoming.

Sincerely,

Phil Hare

PHIL HARE
Member of Congress

Linda T. Sánchez

LINDA T. SÁNCHEZ
Member of Congress

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