

A LabourStart campaign

Mexico: Support electrical workers union

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On October 10, 2009, police and military forces forcibly removed over 44,000 electrical workers from over 400 workplaces across the central Mexico region. The workers are represented by the Mexican Electrical Workers Union (SME, Sindicato Mexicano de Electricistas) and worked for the electrical company Luz y Fuerza del Centro. The presidential decree that the security forces acted upon dissolved the company, intentionally and illegally breaking one of Mexico's oldest and strongest collective bargaining agreements. The assets and facilities that had previously belonged to LyFC were transferred to another state-owned electrical company, Comision Federal de Electricidad (CFE, or Federal Electricity Commission) which operates with a sweetheart union and subcontracts much of its work to small and unregulated private outfits.

The work that was previously performed by highly skilled union workers in safe conditions is now carried out by mainly undocumented workers with no real union rights. These workers face serious risks in the workplace; 30 have died - electrocuted- in the 2 years since Luz y Fuerza was shut down. It is clear that the President of Mexico intended to deny workers their bargained conditions by shutting the company and attempting to bust the union. In the two years since this occurred, however, 16,599 union members of SME have remained in resistance and the union continues to function democratically and independently, struggling for a solution to the conflict. A heroic 6 month occupation of Mexico City's Zocalo forced the government to the negotiating table, but the union and its allies are now extremely concerned that the GoM will renege on its promise to provide a fully budgeted plan for decent union jobs for the 16,599. The initial commitment was to have a solution by November 30, 2011, however, negotiations were stalled after the death of the country's Interior Minister in a helicopter crash. After another tough holiday period, and as negotiations restart this January, the SME is entering a decisive stage of its fight with Mexican government, and is asking for international solidarity to ensure a just and dignified resolution.

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