

Rights Action
November 12, 2013

Below:

- **CODEMUH Statement: Say 'No' to Canadian 'Free' Trade Agreement w Honduran Regime**
- Rights Action report: **LIBRE party candidates, families and campaign leaders suffer 18 killings, and other attacks, leading to November 24 elections:** <http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/killings-and-attempted-killings-honduras-may-2012-present-linked-electoral-process>

CODEMUH (Honduran Women's Collective) Statement on the Signing of 'Free' Trade Agreement between Honduras and Canada

In a country like Honduras, using free trade treaties to open the domestic economy to competition with countries with asymmetrical economies has only attracted transnational companies which operate and implement work systems that exploit Honduran women workers.

These companies register in export processing zones as 'maquilas' -- for example: clothing manufacturers; spinning mills; call centres; agro-export companies; most of which operate in a tax exempt manner. In other words, all the benefits go to the home country of the companies, while operating in a country where the State is passive and permissive when faced with violations of female workers' human rights.

The 'maquilas' (sweatshops), acting in an openly discriminatory fashion, prefer to employ women because they have better hand-eye coordination, have little education, no organizing experience, because this kind of work is socially considered to be an extension of the domestic work imposed on women and because women's gender socialization tends to make them work and accept the

working conditions without demanding their human rights be respected.

These exploitative and enslaving working conditions - such as those which exist in Gildan Activewear operations, that is headquartered in Canada and promoted by governments and trade agreements - involve normal work days of an illegal 11 and a half hours, with obligatory overtime, bringing the work week to up to 69 hours. Gildan's system of production goals and quotas is indexed to the salary paid. This results in an even greater exploitation of the workers in order to earn a weekly salary of L1,600,00, which equals US\$76.16.

These illegal working days and the obligation to meet the daily production quota cause damage to the women's health such as occupational musculoskeletal ailments. Currently, CODEMUH is treating more than 100 male and female workers from the Gildan Activewear company who are living with health problems caused by substandard working conditions. 50 of them have been advised to change employment to jobs that avoid performing repetitive movements and assuming positions which strain the neck and shoulder.

All of this should sound a cry of alarm to governments and human rights defense organizations because fostering these kinds of industries and employment violate women's rights to live a violence-free life, with decent working conditions, with no discrimination and with adequate health care.

It is critical that governments promote decent, secure jobs with wages so that workers can live decently and not just survive.

November 5, 2013
Choloma Cortes, Honduras

CODEMUH (www.codemuh.net) is a grassroots, feminist organization with 24 years of experience working with and for women in health, labour rights, gender-based violence, organizing and advocacy.

They work with Honduran women, many of which work in clothing and textile sweatshops owned by transnational corporations including **Hanes** or HBI (US-based), **Delta Apparel** (US-based) and **Gildan** (Montreal-based).

North Americans!

All through November, leading up to and during the November 24 presidential elections, keep on sending this – and other information – to your MPs, Congressional Reps & Senators. Keep on denouncing the very serious and increasing violations of human rights.

- “A High Stakes Elections in Honduras”, article by Dana Frank:
<http://www.rightsaction.org/action-content/high-stakes-election-honduras>

Since the military coup of 2009, the governments of Canada and the USA – and many North American businesses – have maintained strong political, military and economic relations with the regime in power, empowering and ‘legitimizing’ the repressive, military-backed government.

Contact:

- Member Of Parliament:
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfComm/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>
- Congress: <http://www.house.gov/> to get info for your member of Congress, and call: 202-224-3121
- Senate: <http://www.senate.gov/> to get contact for your Senator, and call: 202-224-3121

Tax-Deductible Donations (Canada & U.S.)

To support courageous pro-democracy, environmental, community development and human rights defense work in Honduras, make check payable to "Rights Action" and mail to:

- United States: Box 50887, Washington DC, 20091-0887

- Canada: (Box 552) 351 Queen St. E, Toronto ON, M5A-1T8

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<http://www.rightsaction.org/tax-deductible-donations>

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