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Costa Rica: migrant leader arrested

Brussels, 6 May 2008 (ITUC online): Rónald Fuentes, a migrant union leader in the construction trade and a Nicaraguan national, was arrested on 30 April and taken to the prison for migrants in Hatillo de San José, Costa Rica. The ITUC lodged a protest against this unfair incarceration and asked the Costa Rican authorities to release him immediately. During his three years in Costa Rica, Fuentes has always conducted himself well and proven his dedication to work and family.

According to news received by the ITUC, Fuentes was arrested by authorities from the National Department of Migration and Immigration of Costa Rica upon reporting to that Department to ascertain the decision regarding his application for a residence card that he submitted more than three years ago. He was immediately taken to the prison in Hatillo de San José, an insalubrious migrant detention centre where detainees are kept in inhumane conditions.

In a letter to the Costa Rican authorities (http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/RonaldFuentes_costarica.pdf), the ITUC joins forces with the Centro Sindical de Migrantes, the Confederación de Trabajadores Rerum Novarum (CTRN) of Costa Rica and the Central Sandinista de Trabajadores de Nicaragua (CST) to urge President Oscar Arias to take the necessary steps to secure the immediate release of Rónald Fuentes, a major player in the organisation of migrant workers in the construction union.

In March 2007 an agreement was signed between CTRN Costa Rica and CST Nicaragua creating the Centro Sindical de Atención al Migrantes (CSM) in order to organise migrant workers. Since its creation, the CSM has met with the Costa Rican authorities on multiple occasions and with the International Organization for Migration (IOM).

“Migrant workers are workers just like any others,” said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. “They have the same right to a decent job and to live without pressure from the authorities. The right of migrant workers to form a union or to join the union of their choice, and their right to engage in collective bargaining, must also be respected.”

ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>.

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