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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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## Transport strike in Guatemala: 1 dead, 48 arrested

Brussels, 9 May 2008 (ITUC OnLine): On 5 May the Union of Professional and Heavy Goods Vehicles Drivers, affiliated to the National Workers' Federation (FENATRA), agreed to stop work following the decision by the Mayor of Guatemala City to prohibit the free circulation of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the morning and the afternoon within the urban perimeter.

The Mayor's decision, copied by other municipal authorities, affects the work of HGV drivers who have been subjected to continuous attacks, abductions, mental and physical tiredness, longer working hours with no increase in pay, and the dangers of the parking areas at the entrances to the city, where they risk their lives because they are easy prey for potential assailants.

The ban on HGVs in the city is in breach of the drivers' human rights and their right to work, as guaranteed by the Political Constitution of the Republic of Guatemala, the Traffic Law, the Labour Code and the international conventions of the ILO ratified by Guatemala.

On 8 May, 47 drivers were arrested and the government ordered a state of emergency. Several of those arrested stated that agents of the National Civilian Police (PNC) used violence while apprehending them and that they gave no reason for their arrest. José Rodolfo Valiente Fernández, one of the arrested drivers, was taken to hospital with several injuries. He said that he had been physically attacked after his arrest, before his case went before a judge.

On 6 May, MARVIN AREVALO AGUILAR, a driver and union member, was killed in Santo Tomás de Castillo, in the Izabal department, when he was run over by an unidentified driver. He had been taking part in a peaceful demonstration in the town. The ITUC's General Secretary, Guy Ryder, has written to the President of Guatemala, Ing. Álvaro Colom, <[http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/huelga\\_de\\_transportistas\\_mayo.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/huelga_de_transportistas_mayo.pdf)>, urging his government and the Mayor of Guatemala City "to hold frank and open negotiations with the Heavy Goods Vehicles Drivers' Union, to repeal the ban on heavy goods vehicles in the city and to investigate the tragic death of brother MARVIN AREVALO AGUILAR, ensuring that the person responsible is punished with the full weight of the law." Guy Ryder also noted that "Guatemala is obliged to respect the right to strike, having ratified the core conventions of the ILO. The National Civilian Police must not use force and violence against strikers exercising a fundamental right."

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: [www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)  
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