

## Canada and Mexico: what unites us and what separates us

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There is a great gulf of inequality between workers in a country like Canada and those in Mexico. Not only are we talking about the brutal disparity in salary levels or in the respect for human and labour rights, both of which are very high in the country with the maple leaf on its flag, nor even the attention paid to working conditions and the environment, among many other things.

No, the vast chasm that divides the workers and citizens of both nations is that while in Canada fair demands are listened to, addressed and lead to changes, in our country no attention is paid to the same subjects; they are ignored and immediately discarded because only opinions from business leaders matter, the very same company bosses who carry out all manner of abuses and insults against the dignity of people and their own employees.

Powered by money, permissive Mexican members of government act with a corruption, ignorance and bad faith that denigrate and devalue their public office and duties. They don't think anybody realises, not least the very people they are screwing, but they are seriously mistaken, because in today's world everything is in the public domain and the international community is keeping a close eye on them. They believe that nothing is going to happen to them because they go around wearing the cosy and cowardly guise of impunity. Their unfeeling cynicism is a source of such shame.

A very recent example, from just a few days ago; the National Miners Union wrote a letter to Justin Trudeau, Canada's Prime Minister, condemning human and labour rights violations by Torex Gold Resources, a Canadian mining company that owns the concession to exploit the Media Luna mine in Cocula, Guerrero, where the company went as far as to order the killing of two of its workers on 18<sup>th</sup> November, via its accomplices and criminal agents from the local Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM in Spanish).

This letter to Trudeau, (which was copied to his ambassador in Mexico, Pierre Alarie, as well as the Ministers for Government, Alfonso Navarrete Prida, and Work and Social Services, Roberto Campa Cifrián), requested that the governments of both countries intervene to scrutinise and sanction Torex Gold Resources and its cynical and twisted president Fred Stanford, who was one of the main



culprits responsible for causing the strike that has paralyzed operations at Media Luna since 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2017.

Trudeau's government immediately responded to our appeal, and appointed a Canadian ombudsman to the case last week to investigate the behaviour of Canadian companies on foreign soil, and their responsibility for violating Mexico's employment and environmental legislation.

This decision is an answer to the calls made by miners, society and the workers' movement of Canada and Mexico, who have expressed their concern and frustration about the abuse and attacks frequently committed by some companies, which have exhibited their twisted mentality and uncontrolled drive for profits by exploiting the workforce and natural resources that exist in our country.

Up until this decision by Trudeau's administration, it seemed as if there was a contradiction between his politics of practising genuine respect for human rights, and the freedom with which unethical companies were able to act in utter contempt for the rule of law of the country where they operate, making huge gains at the expense of miner's lives. This contradiction seems to be dissipating. This is the way things are going for Torex Gold Resources, which has repressed and murdered its workers in Guerrero state, and for Excellon Resources in Durango, places where they have insisted on crushing miners, hoping to get away with it, without their being affiliated with any democratic trade union such as the Miners Union, which I am honoured to lead.

The challenge now remains for the Mexican government to act accordingly, given that up to now they have been completely passive, lenient and submissive to the interests of Canadian and Mexican companies. In Mexico there isn't even an ombudsman in place to address these issues, nor any appetite for creating such a post, because the authorities prefer the convenience of acting with complicity and indifference, to maintain the existing policy of exploitation. Nothing and no one can touch these companies, and meanwhile the same politicians and businessmen turn their backs on and constantly attack people, workers and society.

Thus, no fair and healthy economic policy is being defined or put in place. Corruption and the lack of national pride, solidarity, democracy and justice are all allowing this state of affairs to thrive, and will eventually lead to social crises. Apathy in government will always have consequences. The public is already very aware of how they have been affected by the government's incapability and tendency to improvise, and now they want to find those responsible for the crisis in which the majority find themselves.

Given these examples, Mexico's industrial and economic policies urgently need reform. The upcoming elections will be a chance to express the firm decision either to change the country's course, or to maintain a development model that is not about moving forward, and which has done real damage to our major population centres.



# Lajornada

Postscript: Yesterday, Wednesday 24<sup>th</sup> January 2018, the company Torex Gold Resources and its hired hitmen at the CTM killed another fellow member of the struggle from the community of Balsas in cold blood, named Quintín Salgado. The attack carried out by the CTM thugs sent by Torex Gold Resources was brutal and cowardly, a continuation of the pattern of random aggression and abuse perpetrated by this mafioso business and crooked union, propped up by the shamelessly complacent attitude of state and federal authorities. The miners condemned this latest attack and called for justice and the application of the maximum legal penalty for the killers.