

I'll return to Mexico without any resentment and with my head held high

He will suggest reopening the case of Pasta de Conchos to punish all those involved.

After a long forced exile after which he never stop fighting to defend the Mexican workers and after receiving threats of death against him and his family, the union leader is preparing his return to México focusing in keep defending labour dignity and end with the impunity over the case of Pasta de Conchos, a mine owned by Grupo Mexico.



▲ Napoleón Gómez Urrutia gave his assurances that he will return to the country and to the Senate straight ahead, after struggling a long political and legal fight.

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After 12 long years of forced exile, Napoleón Gómez Urrutia, leader of *Los Mineros*, announced that he'll return to México on the next days to sworn as Senator of the Mexican Republic, and he will do this by the front door, with his head held high, because he doesn't have anything to hide or to be ashamed of.

The Supreme Court, he emphasized, had exonerated him from the 11 criminal proceedings unfairly instrumented against him.

In an interview with *La Jornada*, he said that despite the unprecedented political persecution, the threats of death and the smear campaign that he suffered and which was created by the most powerful mining entrepreneurs and the former presidents from the PAN party, Vicente Fox and Felipe Calderón, he will return to México without any resentment and without a fighting attitude, but with the idea that legality and justice will prevail.

He also announced that his priority is to collaborate in the creation of a Nation Project powered by the elected President, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, attempting to improve labour conditions to his union and for all the workers. First of all, he will ask that reopen Pasta de Conchos' case be and that all those involved on this tragedy should be punished.

He explained that he will be in México on time to enrol as Elected Senator for MORENA, and to settle the new Federal Congress, of which he will be part. He will come to do it with his family and with the main international union leaders, from the IndustriALL Global Union, organization that enrolls to more than 50 million of workers around the World.

It was a phone interview, from his current home in Canada, where he still resides.

The voice of Gómez Urrutia reflects sadness with regard to the explosion occurred at one of the tunnels of the coal mine in *Pasta de Conchos*, in *Coahuila* on February 19th, 2006, which caused the death of 65 miners.

Besides the awful safety conditions which provoked the accident, *Grupo Mexico*, owner of the mine, refused to rescue the workers and a week later, with the approval of the former Labour Secretary, the *yunquista* (Member of the *Yunque* Organization), Francisco Javier Salazar, the rescue labour was cancelled, without notice if the workers were still alive.

The head of the Union decided to file a complaint against Germán Larrea, owner of *Grupo México*, for industrial homicide, because, in an inexcusable negligent attitude, he abandoned the miners and now, after more than a decade, the 63 bodies remain there at the bottom of the mine.

Immediately, he says, treatments and intimidations began. It has been a long time since the powerful mining entrepreneurs wanted him to quit the Union's leadership, annoyed by the defense of our comrades' rights, of the strikes to demand better salaries.

Gomez Urrutia emphasized that president Vicente Fox wanted at all costs eliminate an independent and democratic union as "Los Mineros" and allied himself with Larrea and

other employers. Immediately a lot of civil and criminal proceedings emerged, a strong slander campaign in printed and electronic media, financed by millionaire resources. He adds that he would never have wanted to leave their country, but was forced to do so, although he never withdrew or abandoned his homeland or his ideals.

-Were you afraid for your life?

-For mine and my relatives also, we received death threats by phone or anonymous letters. My youngest son, who was 18 years old and studying law in Monterrey, when he left school he found at his Volkswagen a bullet wrapped in paper and a note: If you do not ask your father to shut up and stop accusing of industrial homicide, we're going to kill him and the whole family.

The "MORENA" elected senator adds that in these 12 years, through his lawyers, he undertook an unequal law battle, especially during the president Calderon's administration, to fight the false charges within the 11 lawsuits that violate the Constitution.

Nobody can be tried twice for the same facts, but in my case they did it 11 times, due to power abuse and corruption.

All lawsuits turn around the alleged embezzlement of 55 million dollars that the Union managed to take from *Grupo Mexico* –after a long trial- for the shares' payment to *Cananea* workers. However, he pointed out, at the end they were dismissed by in courts and Supreme Court which exonerate me from any charge, in a definitively and unappealable way.

At the same time president Calderon failed his attempts to extradite him. The Government of Canada did not even give admission to the lawsuit and both International and Mexican Interpol refused to issue a warrant, because the Mexican Government presented false information and without legal support.

In the conversation he emphasized that if he had been guilty of any offense, he wouldn't have had the support of any of his brave miner comrades to be reelected six times and haven't had the great international solidarity, expressed in the support from the United Steel Workers, from United States and Canada; Unite the Union, from United Kingdom and AFL-CIO, with the main central in United States and Canada, and even be part of the management of IndustriALL Global Union

From exile, he said, he has led the mining union to achieve the best salary increases and he has written several works, including *Collapse of Dignity*, which tells the case of Pasta de Conchos, other mining tragedies and the struggle against greed and corruption in Mexico.

A book that, in the view of Jyrki Raina, Former General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union, is a powerful testimony of corrupt politicians and cynical businessmen who sought to silence a union and its leader.

He has also received several international awards for defending human and labour rights, including in 2011 the AFL-CIO's prestigious International Meany-Kirkland Human

Rights Award; in 2014 the highest global distinction on labour rights, the Norwegian Award Arthur Svensson; and the most recent, last Tuesday, in Washington, DC, the Global Democracy Award, from Georgetown University.

Despite that, Gómez Urrutia noted that in Mexico there are still those who launch campaigns in some media to discredit him, and there is even someone who recently argued that he will get into the Senate covered.

He replies to them: I am going to arrive in the country and the Senate straight ahead, because I have nothing to hide. I'll return home happy, after winning a legal and political war which lasted for many years.

Gómez Urrutia also emphasized that mine workers strongly supported the campaign of Lopez Obrador and that he is very happy and optimistic, and determined to be part of the battle that the new government will take to eradicate corruption, injustice and inequality.

Mine workers participated voluntarily, with the confidence that Mexico must change and fortunately the result of the election gave Lopez Obrador and *MORENA* a majority voting in order to advance in the transformation of the country.

Especially, he explained, his work as senator will focus on developing a new labour policy that improves the living conditions of Mexicans, in order to end with exploitation, there are safety conditions, decent wages and respect to freedom of association.

At the end, and without naming them, he referred to the incongruity of entrepreneurs whom, until the very day of the presidential election, did everything possible to avoid López Obrador's triumph, but three days after of his overwhelming victory they rushed to send him letters and spread press releases to congratulate him.