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(Union of Textile Industry Workers)
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Dear friends,
national and international human rights, unions, and fair trade organizations,

We send our best greetings.

Recently we learned about communiqué distributed by the National Labor Committee of the United States supposedly in support of Salvadoran organizations.

These communiqués attack the integrity of STIT as an industrial union as they accuse us of being a union organized by the substitute administrator of the Just Garments factory, as not representing the interests of the workers, and as not having autonomy, internal democracy and integrity. With concrete facts we can illustrate that these accusations are false and unfounded.

We can refute each of the charges against our union, but we will focus on the most evident. The communiqués say that there are no founding workers working at Just Garments. We can mention and verify that there are no less than 15 people who entered during Just Garments' first hiring, among which are several leaders of our union's governing board. We are also accused of not representing the interest of the workers, a claim that is nullified by the simple fact that STIT's board of directors has accompanied and promoted a collective action before the Ministry of Labor, a process that was initiated April 10, 2007. The most recent meeting before taking matters to a judicial level was on April 19. These meetings have achieved the commitment of the legal representative of Just Garments to recognize 100% of the severance pay, salaries and benefits owed to the workers that we represent, which will take place through the legal process, given that the company faces an illegal closure provoked by a third party. This commitment from the factory, obtained through union action, is grounded in agreements signed at the Ministry of Labor, in formal legal documents. We cannot imagine more decisive proof of our adherence to the mission of our union.

As a union we represent 66% of all the workers who worked at the Just Garments factory until the month of March. This supersedes the number required by law for a union to be able to represent all of the workers in a workplace. In fact, the collective action in front of the Ministry of Labor is endorsed by 26 of the 39 workers who worked at Just Garments before the closure. Therefore it is clear that those who are spreading the communiqué have been in contact with a minority group that does not represent the workers of Just Garments and should be the last to raise money in their name.

Regarding the closure of Just Garments, our attention is strongly drawn to the fact that the communiqués do not mention that the closure has been provoked, not by the administration of Just Garments, but instead by a third party's illegal action, **Mr Carlos Siman Safie**, owner of the building that Just Garments rents **and member of one of the most powerful and hegemonic families of El Salvador**. We believe that this omission only benefits this powerful industrialist.

Also, we notice the praise given to one of SEAC Intl's founders past with Amnesty International but there is no mention of SEAC's associate manager's previous high managerial position with FEDEX, (a company known for anti-unionism).

As STIT, we circulated a communiqué to allied organizations on January 19, 2007, attributing responsibility to SEAC Intl for the ruin of Just Garments, describing in detail the causes, facts, and omissions of SEAC Inc. The primary neglect was to fail on several of their commitments, to not listen to Just Garments' guidance and to expose Just Garments to a vulnerable situation that the Salvadoran government then took advantage of through Customs in order to confiscate a container of cloth. This situation ended up tremendously affecting the workers of Just Garments, and because of that we raised our complaint early before the closure. We are surprised that now the intent is to defend labor rights by defending the commercial interests of SEAC Intl.

We also ask ourselves: *Where was the National Labor Committee in December 2005 when we launched a public campaign aimed to pressure the brand **Superior Uniform Group** so that they would bring orders back to the factory and pay fair prices and salaries to Just Garments workers?* (<http://www.clrlabor.org/alerts/2005/dec08-justgarments.htm>) On that occasion we did not receive their quick and disinterested response.

We lament that an unfortunate situation that affects all of our comrades at Just Garments is being taken advantage of and distorted by the NLC and SEAC Intl. The latter has never done anything to merit recognition or certification of "Fair Trade".

We respect, however, the trajectory of most of the Salvadoran organizations that signed the communiqué, given that we understand that they have acted with partial knowledge and that their understanding may even have been manipulated and distorted from reality.

As an industrial worker's union, we are accustomed to attacks by the Salvadoran government and by apparel business owners. This was the case when we suffered death threats in January 2006 during our campaign to support the workers of Evergreen-Campus (a former supplier to the brand Columbia Sportswear), which we denounced to Law for Defense of Human Rights [<http://www.pddh.gob.sv/>]. We never expected these visceral attacks from the supposedly allied side.

Sincerely,

Joaquin Alas Salguero
General Secretary
STIT General Board of Directors