

Farmworkers Go to Mexican Capital to Denounce Slave Conditions



Mexico City, April 16 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A commission of day laborers and farmworkers from the San Quintin region of Baja California arrived in the Mexico City on Wednesday, demanding to meet with senior politicians to pressure agricultural companies into guaranteeing better salaries and working conditions.

The commission, representing some 80,000 farmworkers, achieved its aim and was received by federal lawmakers. Representatives expect to meet with Mexico City Mayor Miguel Angel Mancera, who confirms that arrangements are being made for a meeting with the Sectary of the Interior, Miguel Angel Osorio Chong, and potentially with President Enrique Peña Nieto.

It was in March that an estimated 10,000 workers organized a region-wide strike, paralyzing the agricultural industry, which produces primarily strawberries, onions, asparagus, tomatoes and berries for the U.S. market. The strike was violently repressed by state and municipal police with over 200 arrests.

The workers demand that the major agricultural companies of the region pay them an average of at least \$20 a day, denouncing that they are currently paid \$7. They also demand an eight-hour working day and registration in Mexico's social security system.

Worker and human rights groups have documented so-called semi-slave conditions in the fields of San Quintin and in at least 19 other states in Mexico, pointing to abuse of women and minors, as well as forcing children to work.

Working days are 10 hours on average. “They can work extra hours and they are not paid for these intensive days, or that children are subjected to work, or that women work in dangerous conditions and in the end there is no representation, there is no monitoring by the authorities,” said Margarita Namecio of the *Tlachinollan* Human Rights Center in the *Montaña* region of the western state of Guerrero.

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