

San Quintin Activist Attacked at Home, More Protests in Mexico



Mexico City, May 19 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A leading figure in the movement of Mexican farmers striking to demand better labor conditions in San Quintin, Baja California, was attacked by a gang in her home early Monday, as protests continue in demand of better wages.

The campaign's spokeswoman, Lucila Hernandez Garcia, told Mexican magazine *Proceso* how the windows of the room where she, her husband and three sons were sleeping, were broken when the house was pelted with rocks, at 4:00 a.m. local time. The room, she says, was covered with rocks and shattered glass, in a move "to intimidate, to cast fear, but it's not going to work."

Hernandez Garcia's house is located in the *Las Casitas* community, in the *Los Pinos* ranch, whose workers are often highlighted as some of the most exploited in the country. The activist explained that immediately after the attack she informed an inspector from the National Commission of Human Rights, currently based in San Quintin, who agreed to present a denunciation at the region's Public Ministry.

Hernandez Garcia is the only woman to join the workers' alliance group who went to Mexico City in April to demand authorities to resolve the labor conflicts gripping the region.

Last week, it was thought that steps had been made towards settling the dispute, with Mexican authorities agreeing to 12 of their 14 demands. Officials agreed to basic improvements, including ensuring access to

social security, combating child labor, establishing greater security measures, and building housing for workers.

The San Quintin agricultural workers – many of whom are women and indigenous migrants from other Mexican states – began their strike March 17 with a work stoppage and temporary highway shutdown blocking a main transit way for agricultural goods headed northward to the United States.

About 90 percent of Mexico's farmworkers, fishers and foresters make less than 200 Mexican pesos (\$15) a day for shifts of up to 12 hours, according to a survey by the country's national statistics institute INEGI. This labor sector represents 13 percent of Mexico's total work force, which is estimated at just under 50 million.

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