

Brazilian Unions Sue McDonald's Franchisee



Brasilia, February 26 (teleSUR-RHC)-- A Brazilian workers' union is suing McDonald's operator Arcos Dorados for alleged labor violations dating back as far as 30 years.

The National Confederation of Tourism and Hospitality Workers (Contratuh) filed a suit Monday demanding McDonald's restaurants across the country comply with Brazilian labor law. The union also filed for an injunction barring the opening of any new McDonald's restaurants until franchisee Arcos Dorados brings its labor practices in line with Brazilian law.

With the support of a number of Brazil's largest unions, Contratuh accused Arcos Dorados of a shopping list of labor violations, including fraud. They say for years employees have been ripped off by manipulated time-clocks that shaved hours off shifts, were provided unsanitary work environments and forced to haul long shifts without breaks. They also accused the employer of failing to pay out legally mandated bonuses, unemployment and retirement insurance, overtime, mandatory severance payments and paying below the minimum wage.

The union wants Arcos Dorados to compensate employees for lost income, and pay out additional damages for violating workers' rights. The suit doesn't put a figure on the total amount Contratuh believes workers are owed. However, under Brazilian law, Arcos Dorados could be forced to pay out a maximum of 30 percent of its annual sales if Contratuh can prove its case.

McDonald's itself isn't mentioned in the suit, and has long argued its franchisees are responsible for ensuring their restaurants comply with local laws. Arcos Dorados itself has responded to the case by stating its labor practices adhere to Brazilian law.

Boasting more than 90,000 employees across Latin America, Arcos Dorados claims to be the largest McDonald's franchisee in the world. The continent-wide franchisee says it has over 700 fast-food restaurants in Brazil.

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