

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 30, 2020

The Honorable Michael Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

We write to request that your department aggressively work to help secure the immediate release of imprisoned Mexican labor lawyer Susana Prieto Terrazas. Ms. Prieto was arrested and detained by the State of Tamaulipas on June 8, 2020 on trumped-up charges for “mutiny, threats and coercion.”¹

We agree with U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer who has labeled the arrest a “bad indicator” of the Mexican government’s compliance with new labor standards.² We urge you to raise the issue of Ms. Prieto’s arrest at the highest levels with your counterparts in Mexico, including in the lead up to and at the reported upcoming White House summit between Donald Trump and the President of Mexico, and ask that you to demand Ms. Prieto’s immediate release. Continuation of Ms. Prieto’s case sends the wrong message to workers and activists that authorities in Mexico at all levels of government will not protect workers’ rights from threats and violations.

Ms. Prieto has a long history of advocating for the labor rights of workers in factories near the U.S.-Mexico border. In her work, Ms. Prieto has demanded higher wages for workers in Mexican factories and defended workers protesting for proper health and safety measures to protect against COVID-19 in reopened facilities. Ms. Prieto’s work has been important, as the deadly virus has killed dozens of workers. Activists like Ms. Prieto are fighting to implement recently improved Mexican labor laws by seeking to register a new independent union to replace a company-connected protection contract agreement, which is a core protection guaranteed by the renegotiated North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and Mexico’s law.

While it was encouraging to see the Mexican Ministry of Labor and the National Commission for Human Rights call for due process in Ms. Prieto’s trial, it is a tragic commentary for labor reform in Mexico that judicial proceedings on this matter are even occurring given Ms. Prieto is being detained because she sought to organize independent unions and help Mexican workers defend their rights. Moreover, her life is at risk while awaiting a final resolution to her case

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trade-mexico-labor/arrest-of-mexican-labor-activist-raises-concerns-for-worker-rights-idUSKBN23H02P>

² Ways and Means Committee Hearing on the 2020 Trade Policy Agenda, Wednesday, June 17, 2020

because Mexican jails, like those in the United States, are hotbeds for COVID-19 transmission. This is made worse since Ms. Prieto was punitively denied bail.

We sincerely hope that all levels of the Mexican government respect labor rights, the freedom to organize independent unions, and independent bargaining powers enshrined in Mexican law and the renegotiated NAFTA. However, we question this commitment considering Ms. Prieto's arrest, the subsequent treatment she has endured.

As we approach the July 1 entry into force for the renegotiated NAFTA, the arrest of Ms. Prieto sends the wrong signal that the renegotiated NAFTA is not on track to deliver the improved Mexican labor conditions and thus diminished incentives for U.S. job outsourcing promised by this administration. We urge you to raise these issues with your counterparts as soon as possible, especially in advance of President Andrés Manuel López Obrador's reported visit to the United States.

Sincerely,



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

Letter also signed by following:

Rep. Don Beyer	Rep. Dan Kildee	Rep. John P. Sarbanes
Rep. Suzanne Bonamici	Rep. John Larson	Rep. Mary Gay Scanlon
Rep. Brendan F. Boyle	Rep. Barbara Lee	Rep. Jan Schakowsky
Rep. André Carson	Rep. Andy Levin	Rep. Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Rep. Judy Chu	Rep. Zoe Lofgren	Rep. José E. Serrano
Rep. David N. Cicilline	Rep. Alan Lowenthal	Rep. Terri A. Sewell
Rep. Steve Cohen	Rep. Stephen F. Lynch	Rep. Albio Sires
Rep. Danny K. Davis	Rep. James P. McGovern	Rep. Darren Soto
Rep. Peter A. DeFazio	Rep. Grace Meng	Rep. Thomas R. Suozzi
Rep. Rosa L. DeLauro	Rep. Gwen Moore	Rep. Mike Thompson
Rep. Ted Deutch	Rep. Donald Norcross	Rep. Rashida Tlaib
Rep. Debbie Dingell	Rep. Eleanor H. Norton	Rep. David Trone
Rep. Veronica Escobar	Rep. Ilhan Omar	Rep. Nydia M. Velázquez
Rep. Adriano Espaillat	Rep. Frank Pallone, Jr.	Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Rep. Jesús G. "Chuy" García	Rep. Mark Pocan	Rep. Bonnie Watson Coleman
Rep. Jimmy Gomez	Rep. Ayanna Pressley	Rep. Peter Welch
Rep. Raúl M. Grijalva	Rep. David Price	Rep. Susan Wild
Rep. Brian Higgins	Rep. Jamie Raskin	
Rep. Marcy Kaptur	Rep. Bobby L. Rush	
Rep. Joseph P. Kennedy, III	Rep. Tim Ryan	
Rep. Ro Khanna	Rep. Linda Sánchez	