

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 25, 2015

Ambassador Samantha Power
U.S. Permanent Representative to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, N.Y. 10017

Dear Ambassador Power,

We are deeply alarmed that the International Labour Organization (ILO), which is charged with guaranteeing labor rights throughout the world, chose to exclude the executive director of a well-respected labor rights organization from participating in the 104th Session of the International Labour Conference (ILC). Accordingly, we respectfully request an inquiry into his exclusion, details regarding the ILO's new policy toward visitors, and whether these new standards were arbitrarily applied in this case.

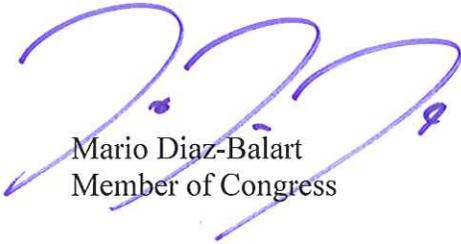
We are informed that Joel Brito, Executive Director of International Group for Corporate Social Responsibility in Cuba (GIRSCC), has attended the ILC for five consecutive years. However, upon arriving at the ILC in Geneva this year, he was prevented from entering the premises by UN security and provided no reason for his exclusion. Mr. Brito is a political asylee and U.S. citizen who, prior to 1997, was an elected member of the National Committee of Cuba's labor monopoly, Workers' Central Union of Cuba (CTU). After witnessing labor violations in totalitarian Cuba firsthand, he has devoted the past decade to promoting genuine labor rights in Cuba. Yet when he returned to the 104th Session of the ILC, he was unceremoniously excluded. In explaining why Mr. Brito was excluded, Christophe Perrin, Director of Conference Services at the ILO, writing on behalf of ILO Director-General Guy Ryder, responded that, "At the request of ILO constituents and following various disruptions in the work of the conference...during the course of the last few years, tighter controls and security checks have been put into place this year in order to avoid any further disruption to occur."

Mr. Perrin's insulting response to Mr. Brito provides no concrete reason as to why he was excluded from the conference, and provides no consideration of his important work on labor rights. It is especially troubling that ILO "constituents" may effectively blacklist a reputable labor activist without any prior notice and without justification. Because Mr. Brito works to promote labor rights in Cuba, it is difficult to imagine "constituents" other than the Castro regime that would attempt to prohibit his participation in the ILC.

Accordingly, within all applicable rules and regulations, we respectfully request that you obtain answers regarding Mr. Brito's exclusion and the new policies pertaining to future ILCs. Specifically, we request a detailed description of the policy for excluding "visitors" from future ILCs, including what guidelines are in place to ensure that such exclusions are not arbitrary or inconsistent with the ILO's mission. Further, Mr. Perrin's vague mention of "tighter controls and security checks" needs further specificity as to both what those "controls" and "checks" entail, and how they were applied to Mr. Brito in finding that he poses a security risk. Further, we request an enumeration of the alleged "disruptions" that led to this new policy, and what "constituents" demanded this outrageous concession.

As Members of Congress with a special interest in human rights in Cuba, we are outraged that the premier organization tasked with promoting labor rights globally excluded a key organization that effectively promotes labor rights inside Cuba. It would be especially disgraceful if he was excluded to placate a totalitarian regime that willfully suppresses free assembly, collective bargaining, and every other labor right that the ILO exists to protect. We expect that the ILO would not abandon its principles so wantonly.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Member of Congress

cc: Honorable John Kerry, Secretary of State of the United States

cc: Guy Ryder, Director-General, International Labour Organization

cc: Richard Trumka, President, AFL-CIO