

Ambassador William H. Moser, Director
 Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations
 US State Department
 2201 C Street NW
 Washington, DC 20520
moserwh@state.gov

September 21, 2022

Dear Ambassador Moser:

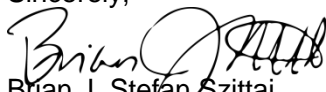
We are concerned that the US State Department is not upholding labor rights in Honduras. For the past two months, construction workers at the new US Embassy in Tegucigalpa have been making reports about unsafe work conditions and the lack of job security. In charge of the construction is B.L. Harbert International, an Alabama-based company that has built many embassies and consulates for the US State Department. This isn't the first embassy project where this company has had labor disputes. There have also been protests and strikes in Turkey, Namibia, and Ghana. We urge your office to intervene. We expect the US government to uphold the same labor standards in foreign construction as required to be upheld domestically.

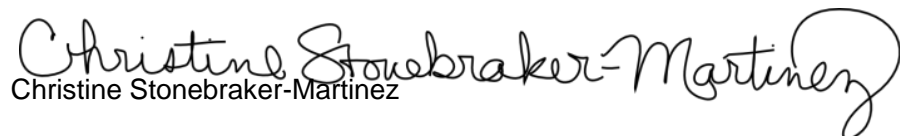
About two-thirds of the 1100 construction workers have been on strike intermittently since early July. Although construction workers in Honduras do not have union representation, these striking workers constitute an ad hoc organization with serious grievances. The company has offered contracts to some workers but not others, in an apparent attempt to bypass the striking workers and pit workers against each other. Workers report that the temporary contracts are deficient in provisions for job security. The work contracts cover some but not all of the legally mandated benefits; for instance, they lack protections for workers injured on the job. Workplace accidents, including severed fingers, have occurred. Some injured workers have been fired. If workers miss a day of work, they are routinely fired. Some workers have fallen ill from rotten food given to them for lunch by the company. These conditions, in addition to frequent racist comments from supervisors, have poisoned any trust the workers had in B.L. Harbert or the U.S. government.

To rectify the injustices being experienced by construction workers at the new embassy, we urge you to demand that B.L. Harbert International:

- negotiate in good faith with the worker leaders to resolve their issues in conformity with Honduran labor and health and safety laws, including conforming with the law on reporting injuries and providing medical care and compensation for injured workers, and treating the workers with respect.
- reinstate 19 workers, including leaders of the strike, who were not given contracts and de facto fired

Sincerely,


 Brian J. Stefan Szittai
 Co-Coordinator


 Christine Stonebraker-Martinez

copies: Blanca Sarahí Izaguirre Lozano, National Commissioner for Human Rights of Honduras (CONADEH) ~ via email
 Rosa Seaman, Vice-Minister for Protection, Secretariat for Human Rights (SEDH) ~ via email
 Sarahí Cerna, Secretaria del Trabajo y Seguridad Social (Secretariat of Labor and Social Security) of Honduras ~ via US mail and website contact form
 Embassy of Honduras in Washington, DC c/o Alejandra Sandoval Taixes ~ via email and US mail
 Carlos Pulido, Rapporteur for Honduras, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) ~ via email and US mail
 Soledad García Muñoz, Special Rapporteur on Economic, Social, Cultural, and Environmental Rights, IACHR ~ via email and US mail
 Isabel Albaladejo Escribano, Representative to Honduras of the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OACNUDH) ~ via email
 Alice Shackelford, UN Resident Coordinator in Honduras, Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights ~ via email
 US Embassy in Honduras: Ambassador Laura F. Dogu and Ariel Jahner, Human Rights Officer ~ via email
 US State Department: Bryan Schell, Honduras Desk Officer ~ via email
 US State Department: Christine Foushee, Director of External Affairs ~ via email
 US Department of Labor: Thea Lee, Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs ~ via email and US mail
 US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Beatty, Brown, Gibbs, González, Johnson, Jordan, Joyce, Kaptur, Latta, Ryan ~ via email

The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter: