

CAMPAIGN TO FREE THE CUBAN FIVE LEAPS FORWARD

By: Morteza Gorgzadeh

On Sunday August 8th, the movement to free the Cuban Five, Rene González, Gerardo Hernández, Antonio Guerrero, Fernando González and Ramón Labañino, leaped forward in a major way by the hosting of a reception for the family members of the Cuban Five in Toronto, organized by the active support and participation of the leadership of organized labour, which included: United Steelworkers-Canada, Service Employees International Union (U.S.A.), Workers Uniting (England) and United Steelworkers(International President).

The family members of the anti-terrorist Cuban Five political prisoners of the empire who addressed a packed Steelworkers' Hall, were Olga Salanueva, Adriana Pérez (the wives of René González and Gerardo Hernández respectively, who are being denied visitation rights with their husbands) and Irma González. They spoke about the ordeal that Gerardo Hernández had just faced throughout approximately two weeks of complete isolation, while seriously ill and suffering from high and complicated blood pressure. They explained how international solidarity forced the U.S. authorities to take him out of these brutal and torturous conditions of confinement. All three women addressed the unjust conditions that the Cuban Five have been subjected to since Sept. 12th, 1998 (the date of their arrest) as well as the need to organize more solidarity actions, in order to win visitation rights and, ultimately, freedom for the Cuban Five.



Ken Newman (President of the United Steelworkers-Canada), with Olga Salanueva, Adriana Pérez and Irma González

The reception was led and chaired by Ken Newman, President of the United Steelworkers-Canada, who communicated to the enthusiastic participants that the International President, Leo Gerard, sent his greetings as well as his apologies for not being able to attend in person due to an unexpected family emergency. After the presentations of the family members, which were often interrupted by the audience's applause, the President Emeritus of the SEIU, Andy Stan, and the Joint General Secretary of Unite (the UK's largest Union), Tony Woodley, spoke strongly in support of the families and of the need to continue pressuring the U.S. government until the Five are free.

Jack Layton, the leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, was also invited to speak and he announced his commitment of raising the issue of the Cuban Five in the Parliament on behalf of the NDP and of doing whatever they can, in order to raise awareness about the case of the Five.

At the end of the presentation, it was announced that a letter addressed to President Barak Obama, Secretary of State-Hillary Clinton, and ... Eric Holder, will be signed by the leadership of the unions represented and will be mailed to voice their support and commitment to the cause of the Cuban Five. Participants were also asked to pick the colourful and professionally printed brochure, "The Miami Five", signed by the Cuba Solidarity Network, which displayed the logos of the British TUC, SEIU, the International Brotherhood of Teamsters, Workers Uniting, Unite the Union and the United Steelworkers.

The depth of solidarity for the Cuban Five, heroes of Cuba and of humanity in the struggle against U.S.-based terrorism, could be witnessed by the presence of a couple in their 80's, who had traveled for approximately 4 hours, in order to attend the reception. The same couple had also taken part in the previous Tuesday's emergency rally in solidarity with Gerardo Hernández and the Cuban Five in Toronto.

With this major boost of the campaign, **NOW** is the time to increase the pressure and to continue organizing educational sessions on the issue, while mobilizing the largest number of endorsers, until family visitation rights are granted to Olga and Adriana and until the Cuban Five are finally freed and returned to their loved ones in Cuba.