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Morocco

Morocco: Call for solidarity: Agricultural workers in the Agadir region fight against agribusiness offensive on the right to organize

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A young trade unionist Aatika Fizazi, a member of the national bureau of the National Union of Agricultural Workers (SNOVA) and general secretary of his local section in the Chtouka Ait Baha region (Agadir), was dismissed on 18/10/2018, with two comrades Noureddine el Bouhali and Abdelmoumen Haddaqui, by the management of DUROC.

They have returned to sit-in in front of the headquarters of the company in Khmiss Ait Amira since 23/10/2018. Aatika and his two comrades work as farm workers at DUROC No. 2, one of 14 DUROC farms (about 400 hectares of modern hydroponic greenhouses) in the Agadir region, for the production of cherry tomatoes for export mainly to European countries, with a volume of 37,000 tons per year.

Its export brands are LEÃ LA and DFMA. DUROC, which also has its own packaging plant, is part of the DELASSUS group, which belongs to one of the big billionaire families in Morocco, Bennani Smirès. The group specializes in the production, packaging and export of several agricultural products, mainly citrus fruits (2000 hectares), grapes (60 hectares), flowers (60 hectares) and so on.

The reason for the dismissal for Aatika is unjustified absence on Sunday 14/10/2018 whereas this has been the day of his usual weekly leave since 2005, and for Noureddine and Abdelmoumen it was a low output and refusal to perform the tasks assigned to them, which is not true.

This is an unfair dismissal. In fact, DUROC wants to get rid of trade unionists to increase the pace of work in the name of productivity and output but without any benefits in terms of wages and bonuses. The competitiveness of the company involves intense accentuation of the exploitation of the workers and increased working hours.

Indeed, according to the Employment Code in Morocco, for agricultural activities, the normal working hours of employees are set at 2,496 hours per year or 48 hours per week, while for other sectors, they are fixed at 2,288 hours a year or 44 hours a week. The legal minimum net wage in agriculture is set at 1,691 dirhams (154 euros) per month and in industry at 2,398 dirhams (218 euros) per month.

DUROC's management persists in the flouting of trade union rights faced with the inertia and complicity of the employment inspectorate and local authorities. For Aatika Fizazi and his two comrades, this struggle is decisive in stopping the offensive of the different agribusiness groups which are concentrated in the region of Agadir against trades unionism and the few gains it has won.

The union offices of the agricultural workers in the region organized several sit-ins in solidarity with the dismissed trade unionists and drew up a new program of struggle which includes:

- Daily solidarity sit-ins in front of the DUROC headquarters in Khmiss Ait Amira from 17/12/2018
- A regional sit-in in front of the headquarters of the rural municipality of Khmiss Ait Amira on Thursday 27/12/2018
- A regional solidarity march on Thursday, January 3, 2019.

However, we are calling on the public and local, national, regional and international organizations, associations,

networks, and activists to participate in our campaign to:

- Denounce DUROC's actions against trade unionists and the right to organize
- Demand the return of Aatika Fizazi and his two comrades to their work with their rights and benefits
- Broaden solidarity with the struggle of trade unionists.

Please send the model message:

We the undersigned.....:

- Denounce the unfair dismissal of Aatika Fizazi and his two comrades
Noureddine el Bouhali and Abdelmoumen Haddaqui.
- Demand their return to work with their rights and benefits and respect for the right to organize.
- Will participate in the international campaign of solidarity with the struggle of the three trade unionists.

To the following emails:

Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs
communication@emploi.gov.ma

DUROC company
Noureddine.rhh@duroc.ma

The DELASSUS group
kbs@delassus.com
contact@delssus.com

With copies to local union officials:
FNSA-SNOUVA (Chtouka Ait Baha-Agadir Local Section)

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You can follow the different forms of struggle of farm workers in the region of Chtouka Ait Baha (Agadir) on the Facebook page of the local trade union branch.

PS:

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