

Unions fight for justice for Miami Five on 10th anniversary of imprisonment

The UK's largest unions are stepping up the campaign for justice for the Miami Five with the launch of a short film to mark the 10th anniversary of the arrest of the five Cubans unjustly jailed for trying to stop US based terrorist attacks against their country.

To coincide with the anniversary of their arrests in Miami on 12 September 1998, UK union leaders including Unite joint general secretaries, Derek Simpson and Tony Woodley, Unison's Dave Prentis, CWU's Billy Hayes and TUC general secretary Brendan Barber are calling on the US government to give visitation rights to the families of the Miami Five.

The Miami Five have spent ten years in prison for gathering information about the right wing terrorist groups working out of Miami who were responsible for the deaths of over 3,500 Cubans.

Personalities are also adding their name to an appeal for Justice for the Five and their families. Signatories include many famous names from the world of politics, law, music and arts including writers Iain Banks, Beverley Naidoo, Harold Pinter and actors Julie Christie, Susannah York and Maxine Peake.

Unite joint general secretary, Tony Woodley, said: ***"This case represents a travesty of justice by the US government who are using the Miami Five to make a political point against Cuba. To deny the families the right to visit their loved ones is totally inhumane."***

The United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, part of the UN Commission on Human Rights, have ruled that the detention of the five men was arbitrary and in violation of international law.

The campaign is particularly focussed on the visiting rights for two of the wives of the prisoners, Olga Salanueva, wife of Rene Gonzalez and Adriana Pérez, wife of Gerardo Hernandez who have both been denied the right by the US authorities to even see their husbands for 8 and 10 years.

Amnesty International have condemned this measure as „unnecessarily punitive and contrary both to standards for the humane treatment of prisoners and to states, obligation to protect family life.,

Unite joint general secretary, Derek Simpson said: ***"Unite and the UK and Irish trade union movement are absolutely determined to highlight the injustice of this case. We have raised the issue with our colleagues in US trade unions as the vast majority of Americans are completely unaware about this miscarriage of justice that has occurred in their country. This has been due to the almost total media silence that surrounded this case."***

Both Olga and Adriana will attend a public anniversary vigil at the US Embassy in London at 6pm on Tuesday 7th October 2008, the same day that the petition will be handed over to US officials.

Unite has made a short campaigning which will be sent to over 100s of thousands of union members and will be posted on You Tube. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3KIKBq1d84w>
The film tells the story of the men's imprisonment, the families' plight and demonstrates the growing support among the UK labour movement for visitation rights.