



NATIONAL FEDERATION OF ASSOCIATIONS AND UNIONS OF PUBLIC ENTITIES

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FENASEP DEFENDS THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION IN THE FACE OF HARASSMENT

The International Labour Organisation (ILO) has singled out Panama as a country ruled by one of the most repressive governments against the trade union movement.

This classification, which is an embarrassment to Panamanians, is based on the evidently arbitrary repression that the current government, through its President and Ministry of Labour Development, as its executive arm, is practising against workers' organizations across the country.

Among the trade union organizations affected by the repression is the National Federation of Public Workers' Associations and Unions (FENASEP), which brings together public sector workers' unions and is the only organisation defending the labour interests of thousands of workers in this significant Panamanian workers' organisation.

For more than a year, the Ministry of Labour Development, as part of the government's relentless campaign against all trade union movements, has failed to comply with the legal requirements that oblige it to finance the union education work of organised workers and various other activities aimed at strengthening trade unionism in general. This obligation is met by deducting 1.25% from the fortnightly wages of all workers in the country.

FENASEP, an organisation with more than 40 years of experience throughout the country, has firmly denounced, through all available means, the attacks on the trade union movement and even the criminalisation of numerous Panamanian trade union leaders, several of whom have been imprisoned and even exiled, harassed by authorities who arbitrarily persecute trade unionists opposed to decisions and arbitrary repression that bring shame on the country.

Numerous national and international organisations have denounced the oppression of trade unionism in Panama, an activity that FENASEP has promoted since its foundation through hundreds of conferences, congresses, seminars and training courses to increase the capacity of workers who are members of affiliated trade unions.

FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION, COLLECTIVE AGREEMENT FOR PUBLIC SECTOR WORKERS

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Like FENASEP, other Panamanian unions have been forced to reduce their administrative and union development activities as a result of the incoherent and perverse practice against unions and workers' organizations, using the withholding of monies to which they are entitled by law, a declared confrontation aimed at eliminating freedom of association, which, by constitution, is a fundamental right of all Panamanians.

In the face of this defiant attitude, which affects all workers nationwide, whether in the private sector or in government agencies, FENASEP will remain united and ready to fight for the restoration of their rights and for the exercise of true democracy, because without independent unions, there is no democracy.

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

ALEJANDRO HAYNES HAMILTON
General Secretary