

Public Services International
Internationale des Services Publics
Internacional de Servicios Públicos
Internationale der Öffentlichen Dienste
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File Reference: PW/CK/hr
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9 October 2009

Dear Governor Fortuño,

Public Services International (PSI) wrote to you in May 2009 concerning your administration's intentions to dismiss thousands of public sector workers in what we see as a misguided attempt to reduce budgetary deficits.

Since then more than 8,000 public sector workers have been made redundant and another 17, 000 dismissals are projected. As mentioned in our earlier letter to you, the mass dismissals of public sector workers who deliver vital public services to the population runs contrary to any reasonable government policy to achieve a sustainable and productive economy, particularly in a time of economic crisis. These dismissals will have a devastating effect on workers and their families and will cripple Puerto Rico's ability to respond swiftly and effectively to economic, social and environmental challenges.

PSI has also expressed grave concern at the introduction of the notorious Law No. 7 of 9 March 2009, which suspends for two years all current social protection and industrial relations legislation in Puerto Rico for employees in the public sector. This unilateral suspension of all clauses in the Collective Agreement and others referring to wage increases, benefits, plans for training and development and paid leave, goes against all international labour standards. Your instructions to the Chief of Police to activate the National Guard against civilians in case of "grave alterations of public order" is also a matter of serious concern and an affront to the right to freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly.

PSI will continue to express its protests against your Government's actions in all relevant international forums. PSI calls on you to recognise the vital role played by public service workers in building strong economies and to ensure that the rights of all public sector workers, including the right to collective bargaining and the right not be arbitrarily dismissed, are properly guaranteed.

We again call on you to enter into meaningful dialogue with the public sector unions and with civil society organisations in Puerto Rico concerning alternatives for the State's economic recovery while supporting workers' rights and the quality of public services for the whole population.

Yours sincerely

Peter Waldorff
General Secretary

Cc: PSI subregional office Costa Rica; PSI InterAmerican Regional office; SEIU; AFSCME; ITUC Geneva and Brussels; US mission in Geneva

Public Services International (PSI) is a global trade union federation that represents 20 million women and men working in the public services around the world. It has more than 600 affiliated unions in 160 countries and territories. PSI is an autonomous body, which works in association with federations covering other sectors of the workforce and with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). PSI is an officially recognised non-governmental organisation for the public sector within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and has consultative status with ECOSOC and observer status with other UN bodies such as UNCTAD and WTO.