

In numbers

Mexico City

21,163,226 was the recorded population of greater Mexico City in 2009, making it the third largest metropolitan area in the world (after Tokyo and Seoul). The population of Mexico City itself, known as the Distrito Federal (DF), is 8,841,916.

8.0 Size on the Richter scale of the earthquake that hit Mexico City on 19 September 1985, killing at least 10,000 people.

1955 The first ITF regional office in the Americas was opened in Mexico City in 1955. The secretary was Trifón Gómez, an exiled Spanish Republican who had been the leader of the country's railway workers' union and a government minister. The first ITF regional conference had been held six years earlier in Havana, Cuba, and was attended by delegates from 17 countries.

44 Number of demonstrators known to have been killed (although some estimates use a much higher figure) on 2 October 1968 when police opened fire on students and supporters protesting in the Plaza de las Tres Culturas in the Tlatelolco district of Mexico City against government corruption and authoritarianism.

2,216 At 2,216 metres, Mexico City is the eighth highest capital city in the world. The highest is Sucre (Bolivia) at 2,783 metres, followed by the capital cities of Ecuador, Bhutan, Colombia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Yemen.

70 20 August marks the 70th anniversary of the assassination of dissident communist leader Leon Trotsky in Mexico City by an undercover Soviet agent. Trotsky's house in Coyoacán (Río Churabasco 410) is now a museum and lies a few blocks away from the house of artist Frida Kahlo, also a museum (Londres 247). The exiled former Soviet leader stayed with Kahlo when he arrived in Mexico in 1937 before he fell out with her and her partner and fellow artist Diego Rivera.



Grave of Leon Trotsky at the Casa Museo Trotsky.



Dancers welcome Congress participants at yesterday's opening ceremony.

Audio-visual presentation spans the world Organising globally to build strong unions

"We have geared up to organise globally across the ITF as a whole. We have included young workers, prioritised women transport workers and highlighted the issues of the precarious and unprotected," ITF general secretary David Cockroft told Congress yesterday while introducing the report on activities.

Focusing on the global organising successes of the ITF and its affiliates – including "fighting the plague of piracy", "organising along key transport corridors" and furthering "union objectives in global airline alliances" – he set the scene for affiliates' own examples.

Dina Feller, coordinator of the LAN ITF project in the Latin American region, described the three-year programme. It had led to the creation of a new union at LAN airlines in Ecuador, headed up by Ximena López. In addition, unions in Peru had been brought together into a federation and Chilean and Argentine affiliates had increased their membership numbers.

In addition, Bilal Malkawi, ITF Arab World office, explained how unions had assisted in Gaza: "We organised a very special project in January 2009, when we put together relief for Gaza, which was under attack from Israel. Two cargo planes loaded with humanitarian supplies donated by many ITF affiliates, from the Arab World and elsewhere, were sent to Gaza."

HIV positive transport worker Francis Ruwa revealed how he had been involved in the ITF's storytelling project in Mombasa, Kenya, which is challenging stigma and discrimination against people living with HIV/AIDS. He told Congress: "I am here to support all transport workers irrespective of their HIV status to break the silence,

overcome the fear and to gain knowledge about their HIV status and their rights." Delegates were also able to view a clip of the storytelling project: www.itfglobal.org/hiv-Aids/hiv-Aids-3055.cfm

The role of global union UNI and the ITF in helping to build union organising in global delivery firm DHL was highlighted by Neil Anderson, UNI's head of post and logistics. He outlined how workers' issues were taken to shareholders and regional cooperation was built. He commented: "We are ready for dialogue with the company and we are determined that we will conclude a global framework agreement with DHL."

The audio-visual presentation, with film and music clips of ITF activities around the world over the past four years, made the link between the Organising Globally theme of the 2006 Durban Congress and the theme of this year's Congress: Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport.

Summing up the session, Cockroft declared: "Here is our message to corporate global employers: ITF unions are here to stay. There is no place to hide. Companies cannot escape social and safety standards by crossing borders – ITF unions will respond."

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ITF 42ND CONGRESS
MEXICO CITY 2010

DAILY NEWS

No.2

Friday 6 August 2010

What's on today

Road transport workers' section conference: Don Alberto (4th floor), 9.30am-5.30pm.

Civil aviation section conference: Don Diego 3 & 4 (2nd floor), 9.30am-5.30pm.

Seafarers' section conference: Don Diego 1 & 2 (2nd floor), 9.30am-5.30pm.

Trade union rights symposium: Don Alberto (4th floor), 6pm-9pm.



Opening frame of a short English-language documentary film about the ITF's road transport workers' action day last year. It will be screened alongside, a French-language music video, "Faut pas chauffer le chauffeur", in the Don Alberto hall (4th floor) between 1.15pm-1.45pm as part of the series of ITF-related films being shown at lunchtime during Congress.

Congress Daily News

Congress Daily News is published in English, French, German and Spanish. Contributions and comments are welcome. Email: congress_daily@itf.org.uk; tel: +52-55-51 30 53 25 / 6.

Congress website

Visit the ITF's Congress website – www.itfcongress2010.org – for all the news and background to proceedings in Mexico City, plus links to the Congress blog and ITF Flickr and YouTube sites.



Signing the petition for trade union rights in Mexico at the stall located outside the main Congress hall.

Opening Congress speakers denounce union rights violations

Solidarity with Mexican workers has emerged as a key theme at the ITF's 42nd Congress, with speakers highlighting the struggle of unions in Mexico – and elsewhere around the world – to defend their rights.

Speaking at yesterday's plenary session, Randall Howard, outgoing ITF president, commented: "The ITF will not tolerate the blatant violation of human and trade union rights. ... Murders of trade unionists in Colombia are commonplace. In Costa Rica ITF dockers face a government takeover. In Mexico, many yellow unions sign 'protection agreements' intended to collude with the employer but not to protect the workers."

Meanwhile, Benito Bahena, ITF national coordinator, member of the ITF executive board and general secretary of the ATM electric urban transport union, told delegates: "Unfortunately for Mexicans, currently we are living in a period of extreme difficulty for the working class, under an ultra-right wing fraudulent government which aims to eliminate social and union activities, drastically reducing social, human, labour and union rights."

To help challenge these labour violations, the ITF is running a hard-hitting campaign calling for union rights across the world, including Mexico. At Congress, the campaign involves collecting signatures for a petition which is scheduled to be delivered next Monday (9 August) to the Mexican government. It

Solidarity with Mexican workers

aims to establish a dialogue on freedom of association for Mexican workers, as well as on specific rights violations in the offshore oil industry. Companies' operations, such as those of state-owned Pemex, are reported to be intimidating workers and leading to unsafe practices.

Antonio Fritz, ITF Americas regional secretary, explained: "There are violations of human rights and a

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Benito Bahena

My Congress

Benito Bahena y Lome has been general secretary of our host union, the ATM (Alianza de Tranviarios de México), since 1996. He is also an ITF executive board member and ITF national coordinator for Mexico.

What is the significance of Mexico City being the venue for this Congress? This is a very important occasion for all ITF-affiliated unions in Mexico, as this is the first Congress not just in Mexico but in Latin America. It is especially important for us at this time as we are suffering serious problems as a result of a combination of neoliberal policies, foreign investment and unfettered capitalism that is costing us many jobs. The federal government is anti-union and constantly trying to destabilise and weaken unions. This state of affairs has been going on for five years, during which time unions in Mexico have had to face harsh anti-union measures and economic and social policies which aim to reduce working conditions and social benefits. It is particularly unjust that in some industries the retirement age has been raised and pensions lowered.

What message would you like this Congress to send to Mexican workers? The Congress theme of Strong Unions – Sustainable Transport is an



excellent message for all independent and democratic unions in Mexico and I hope it reaches them. It is heartening to see huge banners with this message displayed in the heart of our capital city.

Conversely, is there any message for Congress participants? Talking just about my union, I hope they will be impressed by our joint initiative with the Mexico City mayor and government to create zero emission transport corridors through Mexico City, using electric trolley buses. The first corridor, passing very close to the Congress venue, was

opened in July last year and runs for 43km. Soon an additional two corridors, totalling 50 km, will be in service. This is the first scheme of its kind in Latin America.

What help can Congress participants give to Mexican unions? Firstly, I hope that they will attend the trade union rights symposium today, where representatives of the SME electrical workers' union and the miners' union, both of which have suffered at the hands of this government, will be speaking. I hope too that everyone will sign the Congress petition calling on the government to stop violating Mexico's labour laws. ITF leaders aim to deliver the petition to the minister of employment, Javier Lozano Alarcón, and, if he refuses to receive it in person, we will hold a press conference to denounce him. In addition, on the last day of Congress, there will be a march from the Congress venue to a rally in the Zócalo square. Congress participants will be joined by Mexican workers from various unions in this protest against the federal government's violations of trade union rights. At the same time we will exhort world leaders to find alternative policies to combat global warming ahead of the summit in Cancún in November and December this year.

“Unions in Mexico have had to face harsh anti-union measures and economic and social policies which aim to reduce working conditions and social benefits.”

Solidarity with Mexican workers

From front page
multiplicity of 'yellow' company unions, which make sure that Pemex and other companies carry on unfettered by considerations of proper safety and decent pay.

“That's why the ITF is seeking talks with the federal government and key employers within the offshore oil sector so that cooperation towards a sustainable model in the offshore sector in Mexico can be developed.”

Today, a symposium to highlight trade union rights issues in a range of countries, such as Costa Rica, Guatemala and Iran, but focusing particularly on Mexico, is also being held at Congress (see facing page).

A rally of Congress delegates and ITF staff on the final day of Congress (12 August) through central Mexico City will also demonstrate international solidarity with Mexican affiliates, who are struggling to resist government attacks and secure genuine union rights.



One of the new zero emissions trolley buses currently being introduced in Mexico City with strong support from the ATM. See the interview above for more details.

condemns the “neoliberal political-economic system” and declares that its fundamental objective is to combat social injustice, exploitation, oppression and inequalities.

narco-traffic – and the other from the neoliberal economic model which the government refused to abandon even though it was stagnating the economy, creating chronic unemployment and impoverishing workers.

The union regards Calderón's presidency as illegitimate. He was declared to have beaten his left-of-centre rival, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, by 0.58 per cent of the vote in an election in 2006 which many observers say was marred by irregularities.

Founded in 1924 when various smaller unions in Mexico City united to form a single union, the ATM can trace its roots back to early union organisations formed soon after the creation of a public transport system in the capital in 1857.

Shunning those trade union centres which, says the union, have fallen prey to “corporatism” and “clientism”, the ATM is affiliated to the FESEBS public sector union federation and to the UNT national centre.

In its stated aims, the union

In brief

Problems at Mexicana

The difficulties facing Mexicana airline made their mark on Congress yesterday, when it was announced that Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, was unable to make it to Mexico City. Instead, Burrow – who was stranded in New Zealand – sent a recorded greetings message. Long term, the jobs of 1,500 cabin crew and 700 pilots, as well as ground staff, are at risk. The unions want the government to reveal the terms of privatisation. Owners Grupo Posada have spun-off three new businesses in the past five years: the low cost carriers Mexicana Click and Mexicana Link, along with the maintenance firm MRO. All three are financially healthy. Mexicana, which is the official Congress carrier, however, has borne the set-up costs. Wages at the new airlines are also much lower.

From our blog...

Bayla Sow, general secretary of the Senegalese aviation union, writes about climate change:



“Our situation is a bit different to Europe or America. We don't have advanced transportation systems. We used to have rail, but it is dying. The World Bank is only interested in building roads. And pollution is a really big problem. In Africa we tend to import old cars, they smoke a lot. There isn't really much public transport, only taxis. It's an informal sector, drivers just don't have the money to buy newer cars. Even in civil aviation, there are a lot of small companies that can only afford old planes. And these are highly polluting too. At the moment our main issues in the union are privatisation and temporary work, but I want to change this.”

– ITF president Randall Howard

– This and other Congress blogs can be viewed at www.itfglobal.org/congress2010blog If you want to write a blog, contact anderson_jeremy@itf.org.uk

Emergency motions

Congress is set to debate at least nine emergency motions, dealing with topics that have arisen since the normal deadline for motions in April. They include motion that:

- pledge solidarity with Greek seafarers in their fight against social dumping;
- call for continued action in support of Iranian trade unionists;
- pledge support for Filipino airline workers facing job losses as a result of contracting out;
- express concern over the death at sea in suspicious circumstances of a young South African trainee officer;
- call for solidarity with UPS workers in Turkey;
- urge solidarity with British Airways cabin crew workers fighting anti-union attacks.

What they said at the Congress opening...



“Defending public services and rolling back climate change are directly related to securing clean air and environmentally friendly modes of transport in which collective transport modes take precedence over individual modes, in addition to using air transport which minimises fuel consumption ... Congress must emerge with a clear resolution that calls for stricter regulation of the global financial markets and its institutions to stop greed and exorbitant executive salaries.”

– ITF president Randall Howard



“We are a left-wing government. I think the entire Federal District [Mexico City] government is here, because we are your friends... We are very happy about the [Congress] theme. If we don't strengthen workers, we cannot build a democratic economy. We must build strong unions.”

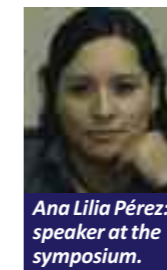
– Marcelo Ebrard, mayor of Mexico City



“Corporate greed has no place in global justice. Oppression of workers and their unions has no place in national or global governance. Indeed, the right to work, decent work, is a fundamental human right and freedom of association, organising and collective bargaining are the rights and tools to drive a fairer globalisation.”

– Sharan Burrow (by video), general secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation

Trade union rights under the spotlight at today's symposium



Ana Lilia Pérez: speaker at the symposium.

Violations of trade union rights not just in Mexico but also in Costa Rica, Guatemala, Iran and other countries around the world will be highlighted today at a meeting in the main conference hall starting at 6pm.

Guest speakers at the trade union rights symposium will include Ana Lilia Pérez, one of Mexico's leading investigative reporters. Her prize-winning exposés of corporate and political corruption and of exploitation of workers have won her international acclaim.

At the behest of the ITF she has recently turned her attention to the scandalous treatment of many offshore oil workers in the Gulf of Mexico's offshore fields. She will be reporting on her findings at tonight's symposium and signing copies of her book, “Camisas azules, manos negras”, which lifts the lid on shady dealings in moves to privatise Mexico's state-owned Pemex petroleum company.

There will be representatives too from unions that have borne the brunt of attacks from Mexico's federal government: the SME electrical workers' union and the SNTMMSRM miners' and metal workers' union.

On 11 October last year, police seized the facilities of the state-owned LFC electricity-generating company, simultaneously closing it down and firing the 44,000 employees – effectively eliminating the SME, a key player in the campaign against the privatisation of the country's petroleum and electric power industries.

At the same time, working closely with the Grupo México mining company, the Mexican government has been waging war on the SNTMMSRM. But the union's three-year strike at the Cananea copper mine has not been broken. And government attempts to foist a new leader on the union have failed. Grupo México meanwhile has tried to create an alternative pro-company union.

Absent from the symposium will be Mansour Osanloo, leader of the Vahed Syndicate Tehran bus workers' union. Though invited to attend, Osanloo still remains in custody in Iran.

His plight will be described by Mac Urata, ITF inland transport sections secretary, who has led much of the international campaign against Osanloo's persecution by the Iranian authorities.

Chaired by Americas regional secretary Antonio Fritz, the symposium will be conducted in English and Spanish.