

August 16, 2021

Vice President Kamala Harris
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Madam Vice President,

We, the undersigned labor and human rights organizations, are writing to express our strong opposition to multinational fruit company Fyffes Plc/Sol and any of its subsidiaries' application to join the "Call to Action"¹ issued by your Administration as part of the overall strategy to promote investment and development in the Central American region and address root causes of migration.

Local unions and international labor and human rights organizations have documented labor abuse at Fyffes farms for years, including rampant wage theft, gender-based harassment and discrimination, reckless exposure to agrochemicals, and violent retaliation for organizing.² In 2016, when workers at Fyffes farms began to organize a union with *El Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Agroindustria y Similares* (STAS), local management fired and blacklisted union leaders, engaged in violent anti-union tactics, and physically and verbally harassed workers. In 2017, General Secretary of local STAS branch Moises Sánchez and his brother Misael were abducted by men with machetes, violently attacked, and threatened to cease union organizing activity or face death.³

In 2012, the AFL-CIO and 26 Honduran trade unions and civil society organizations filed a complaint⁴ under the labor provisions of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR) which cites workers' rights and labor violations on Fyffes/Sol farms and remains open to this day; however, working conditions remain largely unchanged. In 2019, 55 members of Congress signed a letter to the U.S. Trade Representative and the Acting Secretary of Labor citing the systematic labor and human rights abuses at the Fyffes plantations and calling for stronger CAFTA enforcement in Honduras.⁵ As recently as May of this year, STAS union leaders testified before Representatives Grijalva and Schakowsky on recent ongoing anti-union threats against workers at Fyffes farms at a congressional briefing.

¹ The White House, *Fact Sheet: Vice President Harris Launches a Call to Action to the Private Sector to Deepen Investment in the Northern Triangle*, BRIEFING ROOM (May 27, 2021), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/05/27/fact-sheet-vice-president-harris-launches-a-call-to-action-to-the-private-sector-to-deepen-investment-in-the-northern-triangle/>

² International Labor Rights Forum et al, *Fyffes Farms Exposed: The Fight for Justice in the Honduran Melon Fields* (2020), <https://laborrights.org/sites/default/files/docs/FyffesHondurasReport.pdf>

³ "HRD Attack: Misael Sánchez," BUSINESS AND HUMAN RIGHTS RESOURCE CENTER, <https://www.business-humanrights.org/en/latest-news/misael-s%C3%A1nchez/>, (last visited Jul 28, 2021).

⁴ AFL-CIO et al, *Public Submission to the OTLA under Chapters 16 (Labor) and 20 (Dispute Settlement of DR-CAFTA* (Mar 26, 2012), <https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ILAB/legacy/files/HondurasSubmission2012.pdf>.

⁵ Jan Schakowsky et al, *Re: Honduras' Ongoing Violations of the Labor Chapter of CAFTA* (Aug. 1, 2019), <https://schakowsky.house.gov/sites/schakowsky.house.gov/files/Honduras%20Labor%20English.pdf>

Pineapple and banana plantation workers at Fyffes' subsidiaries in Costa Rica have denounced the company's anti-union discrimination and labor rights violations for years. In response to the well-documented abuses in both Costa Rica and Honduras, Europe's Ethical Trading Initiative terminated Fyffes' membership in 2019 after a 3-year investigation and failed remediation process.⁶ In 2018 Fair Trade USA decertified Fyffes' Suragroh plantation.⁷

Given this long and well documented record of abuses, we call on you to assure that Fyffes and any of its subsidiaries in the region are blocked from participation in the Call to Action or other U.S. aid or investment programs of your Administration. Funding Fyffes would be a slap in the face to workers and human rights organizations in the region and would deeply undermine the goals of the Administration to promote prosperity and address root causes of migration. Instead, the Administration needs to rigorously vet participating companies for labor rights violations and require them to adopt the highest labor standards including living wages, freedom of association, health and safety provisions, and accountability mechanisms.

We look forward to being in dialogue with you on this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

AFL-CIO

Alianza Americas

California Institute for Rural Studies

Casa Yurumein

Center for Farmworkers Families

Center for Gender & Refugee Studies

Central American Resource Center (CARECEN-DC)

Central American Resource Center (CARECEN-LA)

Central American Resource Center of Northern CA (CARECEN-SF)

Central Florida Jobs with Justice

Centro San Bonifacio

Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America (CRLN)

Clerics of St. Viator (Viatorians)

Colectivo de Mujeres transnacionales

Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)

CRECEN

Cross Border Network for Justice & Solidarity

Democratic Socialists

⁶ Jane Moyo, *ETI terminates Fyffes' membership (#Statement 8)*, ETHICAL TRADING INITIATIVE (Mar 25, 2019), <https://www.ethicaltrade.org/blog/eti-terminates-fyffes-membership-statement-8>

⁷ Fair Trade USA, *Update: Fair Trade USA Announces Decertification of Suragroh Melon Farm After Audit*, FAIR TRADE CERTIFIED™ (Dec. 14, 2018), <https://www.fairtradecertified.org/news/fair-trade-moves-to-suspend-suragroh-melon-farm>

Durango Unido en Chicago
Fair World Project
Familias Unidas en Acción
Farmworker Association of Florida
Florida Immigrant Coalition (FLIC)
Food Chain Workers Alliance
Georgia STAND-UP
Global Labor Justice-International Labor Rights Forum
Guatemala Human Rights Commission
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, USA-JPIC
Honduras Solidarity Network of North America
Hondureños contra el SIDA
Institute for Policy Studies, Global Economy Program
IRTF Cleveland - InterReligious Task Force on Central America and Colombia
Jobs with Justice
Justice in Motion
Justice is Global
La Voz de los de Abajo
Latin America Solidarity Committee—Milwaukee
Latin America Working Group
Latinas en Poder
Latino Commission on Aids
Milwaukee Fair Trade Coalition
National Day Laborer Organizing Network (NDLON)
National Lawyers Guild
Network in Solidarity with the People of Guatemala (NISGUA)
Nicaragua Center for Community Action
ONECA
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness
ROC-DC
School of the Americas Watch
The Cross Border Network for Justice and Solidarity
US-El Salvador Sister Cities
Worker-driven Social Responsibility Network (WSR-N)

cc: Thea Lee, Deputy Undersecretary for International Affairs, ILAB, DOL