



On August 8th three family members of the Cuban Five were welcomed in Toronto at the Steelworkers Hall. The reception was hosted by five major union organizations: Tony Woodley, General Secretary of Unite (UK's largest union), Andy Stern, SEIU President Emeritus, Leo Gerard, United Steelworkers International President, Ken Neumann, USW National Director for Canada, and Heide Trampus, Canada-Cuba Labour Solidarity Network.

Unite, SEIU and the Steelworkers in Canada have recently adopted an action plan, with five priorities, and the release of the Cuban Five is one of them.

The first speaker was Olga Salanueva, wife of Cuban hero Rene Gonzalez, unjustly imprisoned in the United States. "The Five are unjustly in prison for the crime of saving others' lives. They should not be in jail even one day. Heroes should not be in jail." she told the audience. "The Cuban Five are applying for Habeas Corpus, their last remaining chance, but has little hope or trust in this, as it will be going to the same judge who sentenced them in 2001. The message now is different. Obama should declare them free. But this won't happen spontaneously – need huge push by public opinion."

She talked of Gerardo Hernandez who had just days before been released from inhuman conditions in "the hole". He was released from the hole due to the massive cry from around the world against this treatment.

Adriana Perez, is the wife of Gerardo Hernandez, and has been refused a visa 10 times, to visit the US to see her husband, whom she has not seen since he was imprisoned 12 years ago. Adriana said, "the last 2 weeks were difficult – shows the risks that the five face in prison": On July 21 Gerardo went into the hole, with no ventilation, extreme heat because of the heat wave, where he was held for 13 days.

Irma Gonzales, daughter of Irma and Rene, has been able to visit her father as she holds Cuban and US nationality. Irma talked about how difficult it is to be in the middle, with two parents who are unable to see each other, carrying messages between them. She had been in Canada on tour 7 years ago, and said she never imagined she would be still fighting for the cause of their release.



Jack Layton, leader of the NDP, made some comments at the end of the meeting, He expressed appreciation to the Steelworkers and other unions for getting campaign launched. "Hundreds of thousands of Canadians go to Cuba, but are not sufficiently aware of what faces the Cuban Five and their families" he told the audience. "This is the beginning of a campaign, and our Party will be part of it. How moved I am by your stories; this hall has seen campaigns launched on many issues."

A joint letter was read out, addressed to US President Obama from the union groups calling for the immediate release of the five Cuban anti-terrorist fighters.