**Executive Summary - Tridonex RRM Case**

On May 10, 2021, the AFL-CIO, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), Public Citizen’s Global Trade Watch, and the Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de Industrias y de Servicios “Movimiento 20/32” (SNITIS) filed the first complaint under the Rapid Response Mechanism of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) against Tridonex, an auto parts factory located in Matamoros in the state of Tamaulipas.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Tridonex, a Mexican company, operates three manufacturing plants in Matamoros, Tamaulipas, Mexico, where approximately 3,800 workers are employed producing automotive parts, including brakes, for the U.S. aftermarket. Tridonex is a subsidiary of Cardone Industries, based in Philadelphia, which is controlled by Brookfield Asset Management, a Canadian company. In addition to Tridonex, Cardone has manufacturing operations in Philadelphia and other facilities in Texas and California.

In 2016, Cardone announced that it was moving its brake division from Philadelphia to Mexico and laying off 1,300 workers. Another 680 workers were laid off or furloughed in 2019. SEIU Local 252 represents Cardone workers in Philadelphia and there has been extensive media coverage of the company’s shipping jobs to Mexico.

Tridonex has a collective bargaining agreement (CBA) with the Industrial Union of Workers of Maquiladoras and Assembly Plants of Matamoros and its Municipality (Sindicato Industrial de Trabajadores en Plantas Maquiladoras y Ensambladoras de Matamoros y su Municipio – SITPME), which is affiliated to the Confederation of Mexican Workers (Confederación de Trabajadores de México), a well-known “protection union” in Mexico.[[2]](#footnote-2) The current CBA is considered to be a “protection contract,” as the workers had no role in negotiating the terms and never voted on it.

In early 2019, hundreds of Tridonex workers dissatisfied with SITPME affiliated to an independent union, the Sindicato Nacional Independiente de Trabajadores de Industrias y Servicios “Movimiento 20/32” (National Independent Union of Industry and Service Workers “20/32 Movement”) [SNITIS]. On May 8, 2019, SNITIS received legal recognition (toma de nota) from the Federal Secretariat of Labor and Social Welfare (STPS).

Over the past two years, SNITIS members have faced illegal threats and dismissals by management due to their union activity. Both the local and state governments have failed to protect workers’ right to organize and colluded with the company in a transparent effort to crush the creation of an independent trade union.

In addition, the Government of Tamaulipas has subjected SNITIS leader and attorney Susana Prieto Terrazas to criminal charges, arrest, detention, and punitive conditional release terms in retaliation for her advocacy of the rights of workers at Tridonex and other companies in the State of Tamaulipas. As a result, she has been barred from entering the state of Tamaulipas or having any contact with the Labor Board office in Matamoros, and internally exiled to Chihuahua where the state government has issued similar criminal charges against her in retaliation for her union activities.

The RRM petition documents several actions and inactions by Tridonex and government authorities that plainly violate Chapter 23 of the USMCA and Mexican labor laws, including:

* Tridonex and SITPME have jointly acted to deny the Tridonex workers the opportunity to ratify their CBA and the right to elect their union leaders by personal, free, direct and secret vote in violation of Mexican labor laws.
* Tridonex failed to honor a lawful request by SNITIS members to stop withholding and remitting their dues to the company-controlled SITPME.
* Tridonex retaliated against workers who signed petitions to the Local Conciliation and Arbitration Board requesting they require the company to stop withholding and remitting their dues to SITPME by firing more than 600 workers and compelling fired workers to sign “voluntary” resignations in order to receive severance pay.
* The Government of Tamaulipas, acting as an agent of Tridonex, refused to act on SNITIS’ lawful demand for a vote on which union controls the collective bargaining agreement, denying workers the right to a personal, free, and secret vote to choose their union representative.
* The Government of Tamaulipas, acting as an agent of Tridonex, brought criminal charges against Mexican labor lawyer Susana Prieto, the workers’ legal representative, as a result of which she has been barred from entering the state of Tamaulipas or having any contact with the Labor Board office in Matamoros. These actions have a chilling effect on the workers’ demand for democratic representation and the exercise of their rights.

The Tridonex case provides a critical test of whether Mexico’s labor reforms and USMCA’s Rapid Response Mechanism (RRM) can deliver for Mexican workers denied their fundamental right to organize and bargain for better wages and working conditions. The newly established Interagency Labor Committee should accept the petition and inform Mexico that it will initiate the RRM enforcement process. If Tridonex and Mexico do not remedy the violations within the established timeframes, the U.S. government must move to establish an independent panel of experts to investigate and make appropriate enforcement recommendations.

1. The RRM is the first targeted, facility-specific enforcement mechanism for labor violations contained in a U.S. free trade agreement. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. In Mexico, the vast majority of unionized private sector workers are covered by “protection contracts” - “collective agreements” signed between employers and employer-dominated “protection” unions without the involvement or even knowledge of the workers the union purports to represent. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)