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ARGENTINA: STOP THE PERSECUTION TO THOSE WHO EXPOSE THE IMPACTS OF AGRIBUSINESS!

Given the threats to the team of Socio-Environmental Health of the Medicine School of the National University of Rosario, the people and organizations who sign this letter want to express our rejection to the actions that have been taken against the team of Dr. Damián Verzeñassi during the last weeks and we demand that they be reverted immediately and that full support shall be given to the group that has honored the Argentinean public health with their sowing, example and compromise.

The Institute and the course of Socio-Environmental Health and the last-year practice of the Medicine School of the National University of Rosario has sustained a project of consolidation of an open, democratic university, academic excellency and, more importantly, the service to the people, in which the sanitary camps have turned into a fundamental tool. These sanitary camps are so important that have managed to expose the changes in the profiles of morbimortality in the region in the last twenty years due to a process of constant poisoning after the incorporation of genetically modified organisms resistant to herbicides.

It is evident that exposing the impacts of such a process in the vital cycles of the neighbors affected by agribusiness has not been easy and has challenged powerful interests.

The confidence of these team over the role that the public university has to play as a service to the people, free from pressures from political powers and or from corporations, has allowed these mechanisms to develop complying with the principles of the University Reform of 1918 and has always made public the data and results of these work in the first place to the community, the neighbors affected.

Regretfully, these way of defending the Public University, of building epidemiological data from and with the communities, of publicly exposing the results that belong only to the people, has put in crisis many interests and the pressures didn't wait long. Today from different areas linked to these interests, from provincial authorities that are uncomfortable with these work and that suggest that the ideal for the Medicine School is to silence the results of the sanitary camps to representatives of agribusiness who reveal their true objectives and also to internal actors with a necessity of individual protagonism, we encounter groups whose interests converge to try to silence those who work so that the voices of the victims can be heard.

On October 28th the team found the office where they kept the results of the sanitary camps locked with chains and locks, preventing them from entering their workplace. Previously the Adjunct Professor had been fired from management positions days after he has appeared in the media reporting some of the results of the sanitary camps and the same happened with the Co-Chair of the Socio-Environmental Health course, who guaranteed the inclusion of these topics in the curricula. This action provoked the resignation of other members of the team who didn't accept such persecution.

At the same time we have information that several meetings have been held where sectors linked to the provincial government have been offered the coordination of the final

practice and the sanitary camps.

We consider grotesque that this persecution against the team takes place coincidentally with their participation in the Tribunal against Monsanto in The Hague (the Netherlands) that showed the world the concrete socio-environmental consequences of the imposition of this agribusiness model.

We join the innumerable expressions of solidarity that have been made and, from the different social, academic, sanitary, ecological, educational sectors that we represent we demand:

- The immediate cessation of the hostilities or restrictions to the activities of the Institute of Socio-Environmental Health and the sanitary camps.
- The confirmation of all the appointments as professors of the members of the Institute of Socio-Environmental Health and the sanitary camps.
- The guarantee of the continuation of all the research, educational and territorial work of the team offering full recognition to their contribution as it has been done both nationally and internationally.
- The guarantee of budgetary support so that all the tasks carried out during the last years can continue and can be deepened and fully developed.

Those of us who support the struggle of Dr. Andres Carrasco exposing this model of death are proud that the University chose his birthday as the Day of the Dignified Science. It is about time that the University be up to the level of their past actions and honor those who exercise Dignified Science from their positions and at the service of our people, which ought to be their central objective.

We shall keep alert to the movements that the authorities of the University might be willing to make and we shall accompany all the team in their contributions to a democratic university at the service of the People and not of the governments or corporations.