



## **Migrant farmworkers mourn deaths of migrants killed in Hampstead accident 4 years ago; ask Trudeau government for permanent status**

*"Only permanent immigration status for farmworkers will prevent more deaths"*

Toronto, February 5, 2016 -- Migrant farmworkers across Ontario mourn Hampstead accident victims on the 4th anniversary of their death and claim that the deaths could have been prevented. On February 6th 2012, 11 workers, including 9 migrant workers were killed in one of Ontario's deadliest work-related accidents in recent history. Last week, farmworker group Justicia for Migrant Workers (J4MW) asked the government of PM Justin Trudeau to grant migrant farmworkers permanent residence and thus prevent the abuse and unsafe working conditions that led to this type of accident.

The farmworker advocacy group launched the Harvesting Freedom Campaign in Ottawa last Monday to call on the Federal government to grant migrant farmworkers immigration status in Canada. Chris Ramsaroop, an organizer with J4MW says *"working in Canada with precarious immigration status makes workers subject to dangerous working conditions. Closed work permits tie down migrants to a single employer, who can then easily deport them when they are sick or injured because of work."* Harvesting Freedom will culminate with a Pilgrimage that will start in Windsor and end in Ottawa later this year.

Juan Ariza, one of the Peruvian migrant workers who survived the crash, tells the story of what happened that day: *"In my first day I saw when my co-worker was working like me taking chickens, picking up chickens. After 8 hours, he was driving too. He was doing two jobs in the same day... At the time I didn't know how it would be possible to do that in Canada. 10 people (from my work) died, 10 people pass away and nothing changes. Why? Why the people suffering too much? I don't know how many more accidents have to (happen) or how many people have to die."*

To date, there has never been a coroner's inquest into the death of a migrant worker in Ontario, where the crash happened. While investigations and inquests have created safer working conditions for workers in non-agricultural workplaces, migrant agricultural workers continue to be employed in an apartheid system that subjects them to differential protections than other workers.

Tzazna Miranda, campaign organizer for Harvesting Freedom, adds *"We mourn these deaths and we want to encourage action from both levels of government to address the dangerous barriers faced by migrant workers. The driver was blamed as the major cause of this accident"*

*when a 15-passenger van crashed into a transport truck. But where are the protections for agricultural workers that could have prevented this accident?" She continues "We continue to demand justice for the families of both those who died and the survivors."*

The people who lost their lives in the accident are:

David Armando Blancas-Hernandez  
Jose Mercedes Valdiviezo Taboada  
Cesar Augusto Sanchez-Palacios  
Enrique Arturo Arenaza Leon  
Corsino Jaramillo  
Mario Abril  
Fernando Correa  
Christopher Fulton  
Oscar Compomanes-Corzo  
Juan Castillo  
Elvio Bravo-Suncion

J4MW is a grassroots advocacy group based in Toronto, Vancouver, and Mexico City. Composed of migrant workers and allies, it fights for improved rights and protections for workers in Canada's various labour-migration programs including the Temporary Foreign Worker Program and Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program.

Media Contact:

E: [harvestingfreedom@gmail.com](mailto:harvestingfreedom@gmail.com)

T: Chris Ramsaroop, [647 834 4932](tel:6478344932)

T: Tzazna Miranda Leal [647 618 5325](tel:6476185325)

W: [www.harvestingfreedom.org](http://www.harvestingfreedom.org)

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