

United Nations Special Rapporteur on Migrant Rights Speaks With Nearly 100 Migrants and Non-Governmental Organizations in Atlanta, Georgia

At the request of the United States government, United Nations Special Rapporteur Professor Jorge Bustamante on Migrant Rights visited Atlanta, Georgia on Thursday, May 10, 2007. The Special Rapporteur heard direct testimony from impacted migrants, immigrants, non-governmental organizations, convened a bi-lingual press conference, and was received by members of the Georgia State Assembly.

Professor Bustamante's visit and testimony was coordinated by The United States Human Rights Network, American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia, Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights, and Latin American & Caribbean Community Center.

Senor Bustamante heard personal accounts of the migrant and immigrant experience including human rights violations across rural and urban Georgia. The Special Rapporteur also dialogued with migrants and community-based organizations in other Southeastern states including Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana during his Atlanta visit.

In particular, the Special Rapporteur heard testimony from 20 directly impacted community members, 14 non-governmental organizations, and 6 members of the press to a standing room only crowd at the offices of the Georgia Latino Association of Human Rights. The migrant and immigrant testimony represented the Latino, South Asian, Indian, Caribbean, and African immigrant communities throughout the South.

As part of the briefing, the Special Rapporteur received testimony on numerous migrant human rights issues including housing conditions, worker recruitment, international worker recruitment, guest workers, racial profiling, education, detention/deportation, and Hurricane Katrina related abuses. The Special Rapporteur paid close attention to residents and human rights advocates in South Georgia deeply affected by ICE raids and the Stewart Detention Center, a private prison holding more than 1,200 migrant detainees located in Lumpkin, Georgia.

To conclude the day, the American Civil Liberties Union of Georgia coordinated an elected official reception for the Special Rapporteur. Representatives from the Georgia Association of Latino Elected Officials (GALEO), Georgia Association of Black Elected Officials (GABEO), and members of the Georgia State Assembly provided the concluding testimony for the day. Various elected officials shared concerns with the growing number anti-immigrant initiatives, policy, and ordinances flourishing throughout the State of Georgia.

The Special Rapporteur expressed to the planning committee that he found the event extremely educational and useful. The Human Rights Officer, Ms. Sepideh Mohadjer indicated she obtained valuable and relevant information throughout the course of the day.

The Special Rapporteur pledged an unbiased reporting of his findings to the United Nations Human Rights Council in June, 2007.