Lula receives AFL-CIO human rights award in prison

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Brasilia, October 11 (RHC)-- Just hours before this year's Nobel Peace Prize winner was announced, one of its candidates, former Brazilian president Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, received another human rights award from the U.S. trade union organization, the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO).

Richard Trumka, AFL-CIO president, gave the George Meany-Lane Kirkland Human Rights Award 2019 to Lula personally at the federal police headquarters in Curitiba, Brazil where the former labor leader is serving a prison sentence of eight years and 10 months. While visiting him, Trumka was joined with Pepe Alvarez, General Secretary of the General Union of Workers Union, the largest labor union in Spain.

A statement was released honoring Lula's decades of struggle for the advancement of workers' rights, the strengthening of Brazilian democracy and his struggle for greater equality and justice in the world.

"Privileged elites have undermined the country's fragile democratic institutions, especially the judiciary, and have taken extraordinary and illegal measures to prevent Lula from running for president in 2018, when all polls predicted his victory," read the AFL-CIO communique.

The statement also indicates that since April 7, 2018, the former president has been a political prisoner, convicted of acts yet to be proven.

Last week from prison, the Workers Party (PT) leader said he is convinced that the judge who presided over his case, Sergio Moro -- who was appointed to be Brazil's first Justice Minister last January -- is responsible for creating Lula's alleged connection with the Lava Jato corruption case. "I want to defend myself, because the real criminal in this country is the one who condemned me, and I want to prove it" said Lula on October 4.

Also last week, Brazilian ex-president and long-time labor rights activist, Dilma Rousseff, was one of the General Workers' Union (UGT) guests to celebrate the group's 130th anniversary. The union said it will support Spanish parties and unions for the Lula liberation campaign. The visit to Brazil by Alvarez formed a part of this effort.
Edited by Ed Newman