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May 9, 2011

President Mikheil Saakashvili
Office of the President of Georgia
1 M. Abdushelishvili Street
Tbilisi, Georgia 0103

Re: Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union of Georgia

Dear President Saakashvili:

We write to express our serious concern regarding an apparent campaign by the Georgian government to dismantle the Educators and Scientists Free Trade Union of Georgia (ESFTUG). According to a pending petition to remove Georgia from the list of beneficiaries under the U.S. Generalized System of Preferences (GSP), officials of the Georgian government are: prohibiting the transfer of membership dues from members to the union; encouraging workers to disaffiliate and join a non-union association; interfering in the operation of the union; and threatening and intimidating the union's president and other ESFTUG representatives.

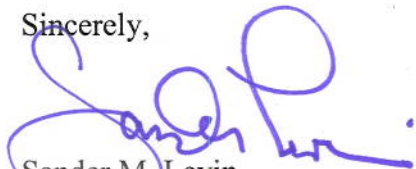
By prohibiting the transfer of membership dues from members to the ESFTUG, the government appears to be pushing the union towards the brink of bankruptcy. According to the GSP petition, the union signed several agreements with local school administrators that contained dues deduction clauses and also obtained consent forms from the members. However, the government directed school administrators not to honor these agreements once the union, through an open and transparent process, elected as president a candidate that was not the government's choice.

In addition to concerns regarding the treatment of ESFTUG, we are also deeply troubled by reports by the International Labor Organization that Georgia's Labor Code continues to fall short of international standards regarding freedom of association, the right to collectively bargain, the right to strike, child labor, and acceptable conditions of work.

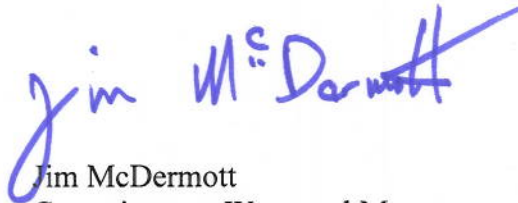
Last year, over \$190 million in exports from Georgia entered the United States under the GSP program. While the program has expired, we fully expect that it will be renewed in the near future. When it is, the U.S. Trade Representative is required by statute to deny eligibility to any country that "is not taking steps to afford internationally recognized worker rights to workers[.]" As a result, the Government of Georgia will need to address these serious concerns expeditiously.

We look forward to your reply.

Sincerely,



Sander M. Levin
Ranking Member
Committee on Ways and Means



Jim McDermott
Committee on Ways and Means
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Trade