

Juan Ariza, Hampstead survivor, a true fighter for migrant workers

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Toronto – May 12, 2014 – Juan Ariza is not only a survivor – he is a fighter. On February 6, 2012, he and two other migrant workers survived a horrific traffic accident near Hampstead, Ontario, when the van they were travelling in collided with another vehicle. Ten of Juan's colleagues were killed, along with the driver of the other vehicle involved in the accident.



The workers who died had only been in Canada for three days, and Juan sustained injuries that changed his life forever. After months of recuperating in Canada, Juan's visa expired and he was forced to return to Peru, despite his appeals to remain in the country and return to work.

As the leading union for agriculture workers, UFCW Canada launched a [campaign](#) demanding the Right to Stay for Juan, and asked Jason Kenney, the federal Minister of Citizenship, Immigration, and Multiculturalism, to grant Juan permanent residency in Canada based on compassionate and humanitarian grounds. Together with the Agriculture Workers Alliance (AWA), UFCW Canada established a [Migrant Workers Family Support Fund](#) and raised \$225,000 to support the families of the crash victims, as well as those who survived the accident.

After months of silence, the federal government recently granted Juan Ariza a temporary resident permit – meaning he can only stay in Canada for two years and cannot bring his wife and young son from Peru to join him. The Harper administration's refusal to recognize Juan's right to permanent residency is yet another slap in the face from a government that has shown nothing but contempt for Canada's 300,000 temporary foreign and migrant farm workers. Without permanent residency, Juan is forced to make another difficult decision: should he return to Canada on a temporary basis without his wife and son, or remain in Peru?

"Juan is a true fighter and I admire his courage in standing up not only for his right to permanent residency in Canada, but also to be with his family," says Paul Meinema, UFCW Canada's National President. "Our union is committed to achieving social justice for all migrant workers, and that means we will do everything in our power to help Juan build a secure life for his family here in Canada. This fight is not over," Brother Meinema adds.

