

# There are NO Borders in the Workers' Struggle!

## An Appeal to Labor to Defend Colombian Unionists

### In Colombia ...

- **184 union organizers were murdered in 2002; in the first half of 2003 more than 41 were killed**
- **86% of all union organizers killed in the world in 2002 were killed there**
- **the paramilitaries (closely allied to the Colombian military) are responsible for 70% of the human rights violations**
- **70% of the union organizers killed in 2002 were from public sector unions**

Colombian labor leaders are being intimidated, displaced, and murdered by the Colombian government, which receives political and economic support from George W. Bush, and its paramilitary allies in a campaign to destroy unions, lower wages, worsen working conditions and enact other anti-worker policies. Their goal is to sell off the Colombian economy to multinational corporations and impose the FTAA. FTAA means the lay-off of workers here and the movement of industry from the U.S. to cheaper regions. Privatization is not restricted to Colombia alone and affects workers in the U.S. and around the world. U.S. labor leaders and workers must act now in solidarity with their sisters and brothers in Colombia to protect the rights of workers worldwide.

## **USO (the Oil Workers Union) is the victim of a brutal campaign of state and paramilitary terror :**

The following are excerpts from an open letter written by Hernando Hernandez, the former president of USO (the union of oil workers in Colombia): "As a consequence of our nationalist position in defense of oil as the driving force behind national development, the Colombian State has unleashed a ferocious persecution of the Oil Workers Union (USO). It was our struggle that gave birth to the state oil company.

...

**In the last 14 years around a hundred valiant USO leaders and activists have been assassinated by the State security forces and paramilitary groups; two have been detained and disappeared; ten have been kidnapped; more than two hundred have suffered the rigours of displacement from their places of work so as not to meet the same fate as those before them..."**

The Colombian government and Uribe Velez have been carrying on a campaign of intimidation directed at destroying USO and selling off Ecopetrol to multinational corporations like Occidental Petroleum, Shell Oil, Exxon Mobil and Texaco, among others.



## COCA COLA WORKERS UNDER ATTACK

**In the past 15 years, 8 union organizers who worked for Coca Cola have been assassinated. Currently 67 are displaced and 38 are under threat of death**

The following is from a speech made by Javier Correa, the president of SINALTRAINAL (the national union of food and bottling workers of Colombia), in December .

“ The paramilitary groups have posted death threats against us at most of the bottling plants. These warnings have given the labor union a deadline of six months to abandon the cities and the bottling plants. Somehow Coca-Cola, with all its security systems, never finds the paramilitaries responsible for posting these notices inside the plants. Nor has it exposed them to the authorities for their punishment. That is because all the company's security is for hunting the workers. **The Coca-Cola bottling plants look like jails. They look like concentration camps.** Even when the sisters and brothers have to relieve themselves as required by physiology, they are followed by armed personal. The situation in the plants is full of pressure and anguish.

To hide its culpability for this state of affairs, the company operates its bottling plants worldwide as franchises, or individual bottling contracts. Yet we say that **Coca-Cola is responsible**-because we have made it aware of all these acts of aggression and it has done nothing.



All these cases have come to the knowledge of justice system. It has not investigated, punished or stopped the abuses; nor has it redressed the damages caused. The processes are delayed, the cases end up in archives-and we, the victims, end up the subject of a lawsuit. ... There is no punishment-not even when there is clear, solid proof.

**As result of the policy of impunity, the union organization at the Coca-Cola Corp. is at the brink of disappearing. The terror campaign is very serious. The fear felt by the workers inside the plants is tremendously high. The blackmail we suffer every day is immense.”**

**ACT NOW!**

Pass a resolution in your union in solidarity with the Colombian labor movement

**Demand an end to U.S. intervention in Colombia!**

Support the International Consumer Campaign against Coca Cola - remove the coke machines from your union hall ...

**International Action Center**  
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