

# COLOMBIA

## The world's most dangerous place for unionized workers

Colombia is the country where more trade unionists are killed than in the rest of the world combined.

Trade union organizers are hunted down and murdered because unions are considered to be subversive and organized workers make demands for better working conditions.

During the administration of the current President, Álvaro Uribe Velez, 560 union officers and members have been brutally and systematically murdered.

The United Nations calls Colombia the "worst humanitarian disaster" in the Western Hemisphere.

Shadowy paramilitary organizations linked to powerful drug cartels have used terror, tortured and massacred entire communities, and caused mass exodus from the countryside in order to appropriate huge tracts of resource rich land. Such groups control 23 of Colombia's 31 provinces.

There have been 955 reported cases of summary executions by the army over the last five years. Colombian soldiers are accused of executing peasants in rural areas and passing them off as leftist rebels killed in combat.

The US Congress refuses to approve a trade agreement with Colombia because of evidence of government involvement in human rights violations, including ongoing and unsolved crimes against trade unionists and direct involvement of the Colombian government with paramilitary death squads.

A Trade Agreement with Canada throws a lifeline of political support to a government spiralling in a crisis of legitimacy.

**Why are we bargaining a trade deal...** with a government so far out of step with such basic Canadian values of human rights, democracy, freedom and the rule of law?



### *The Canadian Labour Congress calls on the Prime Minister to:*

#### **SUSPEND THE TALKS!**

Immediately suspend the Colombia-Canada trade talks, which are currently on a fast track process to completion before the end of the year.

#### **PROVIDE A FULL DEBATE!**

The Canadian government must cease its efforts to push through a quick deal with Colombia. Bring this issue to Parliament for a full and public debate.

#### **PUT HUMAN RIGHTS FIRST!**

Any trade deal with Colombia must include a full human rights impact assessment, with input from human rights and development experts from Canada and Colombia, before it is signed and approved by Parliament.

#### **ADOPT A NEW APPROACH TO TRADE!**

Trade agreements should never make life worse for people. Canada should pursue a trade model that allows governments to manage in favour of human rights and development, and that ensures full democratic discussion of trade and investment policy.



Canadian Labour Congress

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