

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine:

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Colombia: ICFTU appeals to President to counter the impunity of paramilitary groups

Brussels, 25 July 2005 (ICFTU OnLine): On 22 June 2005, the Congress of the Republic of Colombia adopted the "Law on Justice and Peace", the purpose of which is to allow paramilitaries to re-integrate into society. The ICFTU, along with the Colombian trade union movement, numerous social and human rights organisations and the representative in Colombia of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, has strongly condemned this law, which is inadequate in terms of punishing the crimes committed by extremist paramilitaries over the last fifteen years and securing peace and reconciliation in the country.

In addition to condemning the government's decision to pass the law despite the lack of consensus, the ICFTU also denounces the shamefully lenient sentences envisaged for the perpetrators of such serious crimes committed on a massive scale, including the murder of thousands of trade unionists, along with the grossly insufficient time allowed for pre-trial investigations, which will further impede the proper exercise of justice. The law moreover fails to adequately address the question of reparations that the victims of these crimes should receive. Finally, the new legislation also fails to respond to the Colombian people's need to know the truth about the exact nature of these paramilitary groups and their social, political and financial backers.

The ICFTU considers that the new law falls far short of the repeated requests made to the Colombian authorities by the International Labour Organisation (ILO) for an end to the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of crimes against Colombian workers and trade unionists in particular. Granting impunity to these criminals is tantamount to giving them free reign to pursue their criminal acts, as manifested, despite the ceasefire, by their continued persecution of trade unionists.

The ICFTU will draw the attention of the relevant ILO authorities to this regrettable new development.

ICFTU Position on the approval of the Law on Justice and Peace:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991222042&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 234 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. The ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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