

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Guatemala: Brutal Murder of Docker's Union Leader

Brussels, 17 January 2007 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned the brutal killing on 15 January of Dockworkers' Union leader Pedro Zamora in an attack by a number of armed assassins. Zamora, General Secretary of the STPEQ Union, had been leading efforts to stop the privatization of the country's major port of Quetzal and he and fellow unionists had been subjected to a campaign of harassment and intimidation. The union is proposing a programme of upgrading and modernisation as an alternative to placing the port facilities in private hands.

After picking up his children from a hospital appointment, Zamora's car was followed and then rammed by a white pick-up truck, and then sprayed by gunfire from both sides of the vehicle. Of the more than 100 bullets which hit the car, around 20 hit Zamora. One of the killers then walked up to his vehicle and shot him in the face, a method reminiscent of that used by paramilitary forces during the country's civil war. Despite Zamora's efforts to protect his children during the attack, his 3-year-old son was injured but his condition is believed to be stable.

The ITUC and the International Transport Workers Federation are taking this latest case of anti-union repression in Guatemala to the International Labour Organisation, and calling on the Guatemalan government to ensure that a full investigation take place, to identify the culprits and bring them to justice. Suspicions that the management of the Port was involved should constitute one focus of the investigation.

"This gruesome killing recalls the darkest days of Guatemala's decades of civil conflict, and the country's reputation will continue to suffer unless action is taken to root out and punish those who commission and perpetrate intimidation and murder", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder, adding "this murder was planned and premeditated, and appears designed to send a message to those who dare to stand up for fundamental rights".

The ITUC and ITF will be coordinating worldwide action to put pressure on the Guatemalan authorities to guarantee full respect for the rule of law and fundamental workers' rights, to ensure that all those involved in the killing are punished and that the continuing culture of impunity is brought to an end.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates.

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