

>>> ITUC Press <[press@ituc-csi.org](mailto:press@ituc-csi.org)> 22.05.2008 14:53 >>>  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

## ITUC Online

101/220508

### Guatemala: No end to the assassination of trade unionists

Brussels, 22 May 2008 (ITUC Online): The situation of trade unionists in Guatemala is getting worse by the day. Sergio Miguel García, a member of the National Health Workers' Union of Guatemala (SNTSG) and organising and minutes secretary of the "Vector-Borne Diseases" branch in Puerto Barrios, was assassinated on 13 May 2008. He was shot at by unknown assailants while travelling to work by motorbike.

It is not the first time that a leader of the SNTSG has been in the line of fire. On 20 September 2007, Higinio Aguirre, the former coordinator of the same branch of the SNTSG, died in similar circumstances. An investigation into his death has yet to be opened. "The situation of all trade unionists is unacceptable," commented Guy Ryder, the ITUC's general secretary. "The authorities have a responsibility to ensure and maintain safety in the country."

The ITUC firmly condemns these murders, two more in the tragically long list of trade unionists assassinated in Guatemala. The safety and personal integrity of members of the SNTSG in Puerto Barrios, and the rest of the country, is in peril. The SNTSG is not the only union to have problems of this kind. In April 2008, Carlos Enrique Cruz Hernández, a member of the Izabal banana workers' union (SITRABI), was assassinated and Danilo Méndez, also a member of SITRABI, was the target of harassment. On 6 May 2008, Marvin Arévalo Aguilar, a member of the union in Santo Tomás de Castilla, in the Izabal department, was also assassinated. Again, there has been no investigation.

In a letter to the authorities, <[http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Asesinato\\_miembro\\_SNTSG\\_21-05-08.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Asesinato_miembro_SNTSG_21-05-08.pdf)> , the ITUC has urged the Guatemalan government to take all necessary measures to end the unmitigated violence against the Guatemalan trade union movement. The ITUC has reminded President Colom once again of the commitment he made during the ITUC Conference on "The Role of Trade Unions in the Fight Against Impunity" held from 29 to 31 January in Guatemala City, regarding his decision to do everything possible to eradicate violence against trade unionists and put an end to the endemic violence in Guatemala.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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