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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Colombia: Three Trade Unionists Murdered in August

Brussels, 29 August 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The trade union movement in Colombia continues to be the constant target of murders, attempted murders, attacks, and death threats. The ITUC has denounced and strongly condemned the murder of another three trade unionists during the month of August, which brings the number of trade unionists assassinated in 2008 up to 38 (34 men and four women).

Luis Mayusa Prada, a member of the sub-directorate of the CUT (a national union centre affiliated to the ITUC) was murdered in Saravena on 8 August. Manuel Erminson Gamboa Meléndez, vice president of the association of campesinos for the defence of Putumayo, the Asociación Campesina para la Defensa del Putumayo, and a member of the national executive of the agricultural trade union federation, the Federación Sindical Nacional Unitaria Agropecuaria, also affiliated to the CUT, was killed in a barrage of gunfire, receiving seven bullet wounds, in Puerto Asís on 13 August. Omar Galeano Martínez, president of the lottery workers' federation, the Federación Colombiana de Loteros Fecolot, was brutally murdered on 23 August.

The ITUC has denounced these murders and condemned the Colombian state and government for failing to guarantee the free exercise of trade union rights. In a letter addressed to President Uribe http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Colombia_Tres_sindicalistas_asesinados_en_agosto.pdf, the ITUC urged the Colombian authorities to carry out an exhaustive investigation into all the murders and to take every step necessary to ensure respect for workers' and trade union rights, particularly those enshrined in the Core Conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

"The Colombian trade union movement has an important role to play in society," said Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. "The climate of violence is preventing it from fulfilling that role."

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.

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