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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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## Stop impunity in Guatemala: trade union appeal to the European Union

Brussels, 31 October 2008 (ITUC OnLine): A delegation of Guatemalan trade union representatives, including the General Secretaries of the ITUC-affiliated CGTG and CUSG, is to take part in a mission organised by the International Trade Union Confederation. The mission, which will run from Monday 3 to Thursday 20 November and will visit various European member states, is a follow-up to the international trade union conference held in Guatemala in January on "The Role of Trade Union Organisations in the Fight against Impunity".

The delegation's mission is to request aid and cooperation from the international community and European institutions. Aid is needed by the government of President Colom to strengthen its institutions, to consolidate the rule of law, to bring an end to impunity and to establish a tripartite dialogue - producing concrete results - between the government, employers and unions. The success of this dialogue is crucial to workers' free exercise of their basic rights.

The mission will also ask governments and the European Union to give political support to the International Commission against Impunity in Guatemala (set up following an agreement between the United Nations and the Guatemalan government) so that it can investigate the parallel groups acting inside and outside the Guatemalan State. These parallel powers constitute an active threat to good governance by the Guatemalan authorities.

Trade union rights are far from respected in this Latin American country. Guatemala is one of the most dangerous countries in the world for trade unionists. Corruption, drug trafficking and maras (criminal youth gangs) affect the everyday lives of workers in Guatemala. It is estimated that violence claims close to 6000 lives a year and that an average of two women suffer violent deaths every day - the term "femicide" has become part of everyday language in Guatemala.

Guatemala also has one of the worst records, globally, as regards the number of unresolved murder cases. It is against this background that Pedro Zamora, General Secretary of the Guatemalan Port Workers' Union, was murdered, whilst heading a campaign against the privatisation, without worker consultation, of Puerto Quetzal. Zamora's case has become emblematic, but it is far from isolated. "The fight against impunity and organised crime is the fight of all," said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "The international community and the European Union must do everything in their power to end impunity," he added.

The delegation will go to the headquarters of the European Union in

Brussels before travelling on to London, Paris, Madrid, Berlin, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and, finally, Geneva.

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

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