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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Colombia: Another Trade Unionist Assassinated

Brussels, 19 December 2008: The International Trade Union Confederation is again obliged to note that the murders, attempted murders, attacks and death threats to which Colombian trade unionists have continuously been exposed are not ending. The ITUC denounces and categorically condemns the murder of another trade unionist, which took place this December.

William Rubio Ortiz, a member of the leadership of the union SINTRAMBIENTE-CGT, representing employees of the national environmental institution, was killed at 7 p.m. on 12 December, when two shots were fired at his head and shoulder by assassins on motorbikes just after leaving his home in the town of Santander de Quilichao, in the department of Cauca. Brother Ortiz had worked for 22 years for the regional authority (Corporación Autónoma regional del Valle del Cauca) and was currently a member of the union's governing body.

The murder of Brother Ortiz coincided with the union's serious differences of opinion with the director of the Valle regional authority, William Garzón Solís, who has been accused of corruption, harassment of the union and enjoying the support of Senator Martínez, who appears to have links with paramilitaries. Mr. Garzón has stated that he has a list of 50 trade unionists he would like to get rid of.

In a letter sent to President Uribe http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/asesinato_william_Rubio_Ortiz_dic_12.pdf, the ITUC insists that the Colombian authorities carry out a full investigation into this murder and do all in their power to ensure respect of workers' trade union rights, and specifically those enshrined in the core conventions of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

"These killings must stop," stated Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. "It is time to put an end to these crimes and to the impunity in Colombia, so that trade unionists are free to carry out their union work and to protect workers without putting their own lives at risk."

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

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