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Guatemala: Campesino leader threatened

Brussels, 4 March 2009 (ITUC OnLine): On 27 February, Leocadio Juracán, national leader of the Campesino Committee of the Highlands, CCDA, was once again targeted with threats after having given a press conference and radio interview on 20 February, in which he represented the views of the indigenous and campesino community with regard to the rural development bill. Juracán made it clear that the Integral Rural Development Alliance (ADRI) could pull out of the dialogue launched with the Executive ten months ago if no progress is made with the legislation on rural development and an agrarian development policy.

It is not the first time Juracán has come under threat - on 30 April 2008, the vehicle he was travelling in was attacked by firearms.

Leocardio Juracán took part in a mission of the Guatemalan campesino, indigenous and trade union movement, sponsored by the ITUC and supported by its affiliates, which visited seven countries of the European Union in November 2008 to raise awareness among the EU and national authorities regarding the culture of impunity and the violations of ILO Core Conventions in Guatemala.

These latest threats came just days after a high-level mission of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) visited Guatemala and pointed to impunity, the ineffectiveness of the judicial system and the lack of trade union rights as the country's chief problems. The statement constitutes the gravest criticism the Guatemalan state has received from the ILO to date.

In a letter to President Alvaro Colom (http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/juracan_leocadio.pdf), the general secretary of the ITUC, Guy Ryder, stressed that the State of Guatemala and other powers must assume their responsibilities and ensure the security and physical integrity of Guatemala's workers and trade union movement. "It is essential that a swift and exhaustive investigation be carried out with a view to arresting those responsible for these threats and bringing them to justice," underlined Guy Ryder.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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