

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Violence in Colombia continues

Brussels, 27 March 2009: Murders of trade union leaders and members and violence against the trade union movement are continuing, despite the Colombian authorities' assertions to the contrary. Ramiro Cuadros Roballo, Walter Escobar Marín, José Alejandro Amado Castillo and Alexander Pinto Gómez were murdered this March, bringing to nine the number of trade unionists killed in 2009.

For years, Ramiro Cuadros Roballo, a member of the Valle Teachers' Union (SUTEV), a branch of the Colombian Teachers' Federation (FECODE) in Valle del Cauca department, had been receiving threats, and these became more frequent at the end of last year. These threats were duly reported to the appropriate authorities and to the Valle Committee for Threatened and Displaced Persons, which was examining his case, since another teacher, Cuadros Robayo, had followed the procedure specified by Decree 3222 of 2003 to secure recognition as a threatened teacher. On 24 March, as he was about to drive to work, he was confronted by gunmen, who shot him and fled.

Walter Escobar worked at the José María Carbonell school, in the city of Cali in Valle del Cauca department. The circumstances surrounding his murder are not known, since his corpse was found in the city of Palmira on 21 March. He had not been at school for eight days.

José Alejandro Amado Castillo and Alexander Pinto Gómez, of the Girón Santander High and Medium Security Prison, were also murdered in March. On their way home in an official vehicle, they were killed by gunmen on motorbikes. They were both members of the Trade Union Organisation of Employees of the National Penitentiary and Prisons Institution, INPEC ASEINPEC, an affiliate of CGT (General Confederation of Labour).

In a letter to President Uribe (http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/otros_cuatro_sindicalistas_asesinados_marzo_1_.pdf), ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder calls on the government and the Public Prosecutor's Department to fully investigate, and to clarify, what happened and to punish the perpetrators or instigators of these crimes as an example to others. Guy Ryder indicated that it is of the utmost importance "that everything necessary be done to put an end once and for all to this long list of murders, of which the Colombian trade union movement has been the victim for too long".

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

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