

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 8.10.2009 9:46 >>>
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

159/071009

No Let Up in the Onslaught against Colombian Trade Unionists

Brussels, 8 October 2009: On 1 October at 8.30 p.m., hired assassins seriously injured Mario Montes de Oca Anaya and killed Alberto Luis Pastrana Soto, who was with him at the time, as they approached the main entrance of Hospital San Jerónimo in the city of Montería, Córdoba. These crimes are yet another illustration of the failure to improve the lot of trade unionists in Colombia, where there is a systematic policy of violence against the trade union movement.

Montes de Oca Anaya, head of the local branch of the Córdoba teachers' association, ADEMACOR, and a legal advisor on the matter of displaced persons, received three bullet wounds and is currently in hospital in the city of Montería. As in many other such cases, the death threats against the teacher were reported, but the authorities took no action. Mario is the brother of Boris Montes de Oca, a member of the CUT executive and head of the Labour Relations and Collective Bargaining Department.

In a letter to President Uribe, http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/arremetida_contra_el_mov_sindical-_octubre_2009.pdf, Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC, joined with its Colombian affiliates in demanding "a prompt and thorough investigation into these crimes and the facts surrounding them, and that all those responsible be brought to justice."

It is essential and urgent, pointed out Guy Ryder, that the local and national authorities in Colombia "provide every guarantee and take every step necessary to protect the lives of Montes de Oca Anaya's colleagues, so that they can continue with their work to defend trade union and human rights, as well as guaranteeing the right of all to take part in trade union activities, without endangering their lives, in compliance with the core ILO Conventions signed by Colombia".

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

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