

ITUC OnLine

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Spying Scandal Shows Need for Colombia-EU Agreement to Be Suspended

Brussels, 18 May 2010 (ITUC OnLine): In the light of growing concerns that the Colombian intelligence agency DAS has been engaged in clandestine operations both within Colombia and even in the European Union, European and international trade union organisations have called once more for the EU-Colombia-Peru free trade agreement not to be signed on Wednesday 19 May. The agreement is slotted for formal approval at the close of the EU-Latin America-Caribbean Summit currently taking place in Madrid.

“Now that some governments are even suspending aid transfers to Colombia in response to the illegal activities of DAS, it is crystal clear that there is no credible way these negotiations can be concluded in this manner,” commented John Monks, ETUC general secretary. “The ETUC reiterates our demand – shared by all three trade union centres in Colombia – that the FTA not be signed under the current circumstances.”

“On top of the discovery last month of the mass grave in La Macarena thought to contain the unidentified bodies of thousands of victims of extrajudicial executions, the DAS scandal provides the latest evidence of lack of respect for human rights in Colombia,” stated Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. “Any agreement the EU signs with Colombia should contain strong clauses capable of enabling trade unionists and human rights defenders to exercise their rights without putting their lives at risk. Regrettably, much more work needs to be done on the FTA before that is the case, and it should not be signed this week.”

The latest edition of the ITUC Annual Survey of Trade Union Violations, due for publication in June 2010, will this year again highlight the situation of trade union rights in Colombia. In 2008 49 trade unionists were killed in Colombia, a 25 per cent increase from 2007, and 48 were killed in 2009. This year, to date 25 unionists have been murdered.

To read the trade union statement entitled “Towards employment creation, social stability and workers’ rights in relations between Europe and Latin America” in English: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/LLamamiento_Cumbre_Madrid_-_EN_-_Final-ING.pdf

In Spanish: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/LLamamiento_Cumbre_Madrid-ES- Final.pdf

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