

PSI World News 19-03

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PSI CAMPAIGN ON 10 DECEMBER TO END IMPUNITY IN COLOMBIA

Preparations for international human rights day on 10 December are underway and many PSI affiliates have responded to the request to host Colombian trade unionists during that week. The list of sponsoring affiliates is still growing. PSI is distributing a model letter (shortly available on the PSI website) which affiliates are asked to sign and deliver to the nearest Colombian diplomatic mission in their country on 10 December. Education International's Executive Board have recently agreed to support the campaign and to send a delegation to Colombia on 10 December.

In addition, PSI, ICFTU and other global unions will hold an event at the ILO on 10 December to call for an end to the situation of impunity. For more information, contact rights@world-psi.org.

COLOMBIA: ASSASSINATIONS AND DEATH THREATS CONTINUE

On 16 October in Barrancabermeja, Esperanza Amaris Miranda was assassinated in cold blood by the paramilitary group Autodefensas Unidas de Colombia (AUC) and her body left in the street. Esperanza had been working for Organización Femenina Popular, in defence of the human rights of women. On 22 October in Risaralda, the trade union centre received death threats from the AUC aimed at ten trade union leaders and human rights activists. PSI has sent letters of protest to President Uribe of Colombia, calling for the arrest of those responsible.

VER.DI CONGRESS MASSIVELY SUPPORTS COLOMBIAN TRADE UNIONISTS

PSI's German affiliate Ver.di held their first Congress in Berlin from 19-25 October. Frank Bsirske was re-elected as President. During the congress Maria Clara Baquero Sarmiento, President of PSI's Colombian affiliate ASODEFESA, informed the delegates about the dangerous situation for trade unionists in that country. Delegates signed a petition, which was later handed to the Colombian Ambassador in Berlin and started a collection, which the Ver.di Executive increased to an amount of €10.000. Maria Clara then travelled to the ILO in Geneva to give the latest information with respect to the complaint that has been lodged against the Government of Colombia.

WHERE WERE YOU - OR YOUR PREDECESSORS - IN 1907?

The next PSI Congress will be held on 24-28 September 2007 in Vienna. Why Vienna - normally the 2007 Congress should be in Africa? Because that Congress will be PSI's centennial Congress and Austria - with Denmark, Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland - was one of the founding countries of PSI. To mark the centennial, the Austrian affiliates will be coordinating a history project - a book to celebrate and record 100 years of public services. Not a history of PSI - although that will permeate much of the discussion - but of the services our members deliver. When, why and how did these services get created? What have they achieved for our people? How have they changed? What challenges have they faced? How are they preparing themselves to be the basis of decent societies for the next 100 years? To answer those questions, they need stories, information and material from around the world. Some affiliates will have material that precedes 1907; for others, the story will start in 1947 or 1977. No matter: we need to know which affiliates have material which can help us answer that set of questions, concerning hospitals, tax authorities, water services, forestry and environmental services, services for children and old people, etc. We do not need the material itself yet, but rather we need to know what kind of material you might have and whom we should approach next year to start collecting it. Maybe your union has published a history of the union or of one of the services or of a key leader; maybe you have posters or early film or recent video or photos which record some of these things. Please let us know before the end of this year - send a message to Mike.Waghorne@world-psi.org to tell us the kind of material you have and the contact person's address details.

3RD DECEMBER INTERNATIONAL DAY OF DISABLED PERSONS

This year is the 20th anniversary of the adoption of ILO Convention 159 on Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment of Disabled Persons. PSI calls on affiliates to put pressure on governments to ratify ILO Convention 159 or, if the Convention has been ratified, to remind governments of their obligation under the Convention. According to a recent ILO report 'persons with disabilities throughout the world continue to be subjected to discrimination and denial of their rights in the field of employment. Unemployment rate among workers with disabilities tends to be at least twice or three times that of other workers'. For disabled women the statistics are even worse.

The Convention has been ratified by 75 countries, a list of which is available on the ILO website :
<http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/appl/appl-byConv.cfm?hdroff=1&conv=C159&Lang=EN> .
The full text of the Convention is available on the ILO website:
(<http://webfusion.ilo.org/public/db/standards/normes/index.cfm?lang=EN>) or contact PSI Secretariat for copies.

PARTICIPATORY DECISION-MAKING - SEND US YOUR EXPERIENCES

Affiliates are organising an international Quality Public Services Seminar in Brazil in April 2004. The theme of the seminar will be "Social Control" the term used in Brazil to describe community participation in decisions about public services. You can help to make this a successful QPS initiative by letting PSI know of experiences in your country. We are particularly keen to hear from unions who have been involved in any forms of participatory decision-making, what worked and what to be careful of. Outcomes of the seminar will be shared with all affiliates and written up for inclusion in the Quality Public Services Resource Kit. Please contact the Campaign Director wendy.caird@worldpsi.org.

NEW PUBLIC SECTOR FEDERATION IN MALI

PSI Education Officer Christine Roos attended a national workshop in Mali on 11-17 October. The workshop examined and endorsed the statutes of a new national federation grouping all PSI affiliates in the country. The unions also reviewed their strategic plans and agreed to embark on a campaign to consolidate their membership.

ACTRAV LAUNCHES GLOBAL LABOUR UNIVERSITY PROGRAMME

The ILO Workers Activities Bureau (ACTRAV) is participating in the development of a Masters on Labour Policies and Globalisation. The programme is offered by the University of Kassel and the Berlin School of Economics in cooperation with the ILO, the international trade union movement and academic partner institutions. Its aim is to prepare trade unionists to become experts in the fields and to improve trade union capacity in these areas. The programme is for candidates with experience in trade union work or related field with a university degree. In exceptional cases, admission will be granted to candidates with skills and qualifications gained through professional experience and life-long learning. It is a one year programme. For more details see <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/dialogue/actrav/glp/index.htm>.

VACANCY: GLOBAL UNIONS HIV/AIDS CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

The ICFTU has created, with support from UNAIDS, a Global Unions HIV/AIDS campaign coordinator position. The deadline for applications is 7th November. Applications should be sent, together with a CV, to Carine Verstichel, 5 Boulevard Roi Albert II, box 1, 1210 Brussels, Belgium. Tel: +32(2)224.02.19, e-mail: carine.verstichel@icftu.org.

BITE BACK!

PSI is part of the Bite back! Campaign, founded by Friends of the Earth International. To force GMO products into global markets, George Bush has filed a legal dispute at the WTO, accusing the European Union of blocking trade by restricting GMOs. If successful, not only will the EU have to accept genetically modified food and farming but so will the rest of the world.

To make sure consumers have their say, it's time to bite back! See <http://www.bite-back.org>

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