



No end to anti-union violence in Colombia

**38 trade unionists assassinated until now this year,
only one less than the entire previous year**

**Most recent case on Saturday 26 August at Buga
At Santander threats have increased**

Labour Information Agency ENS, 26 August 2008

With the assassination last Saturday of José Omar Galeano Martínez, National President of the Colombian Lottery Workers' Federation (FECOLOC), in the city of Buga, Valle, the number of trade unionists who have lost their lives in violent circumstances so far this year has reached the figure of 38 (34 men and 4 women), according to the "Escuela Nacional Sindical".

That figure takes account of the worrying increase of this phenomenon in Colombia, where the number of trade unionists assassinated in the first eight months of this year is almost equal to the number recorded for the whole of last year, that was 39 cases for the whole country. In addition, this year, the percentage of trade union leaders assassinated is higher: 15 compared to 10 for the previous year.

José Omar Galeano Martínez was killed by hired assassins who shot him twice, at 10 p.m. while he travelled on his motorbike through the streets of Buga. According to information received from the CUT, the trade union centre to which the FECOLOC is affiliated, Galeano Martínez led the struggle in defence of trade union rights of the lottery workers in Colombia, who are opposed to the delivery of national lotteries to private consortia. For this reason, the CUT considers that this is a politically motivated crime.

This was the third murder of a unionist for the month of August. On the 13th, in Puerto Asís, Putumayo, Manuel Erminson Gamboa Meléndez, 32 years old and father of three, was shot seven times. He was Vice-President of the Asociación Campesina para la Defensa del Putumayo, and member of the Fensuagro Nacional Junta.

On 8th August, in Saravena, Arauca, the victim was Luis Mayusa Prada, 46 years old, while he was accompanying one of his four children to a medical visit. On their way back home, at 8 a.m., he was shot by hired assassins. No information has been received concerning their identity. Mayusa was in Saravena where he had moved from the department of Meta, where until days before his death he had served as a member of the CUT sub-leadership.

Most publicised cases

Of the 38 cases of murdered trade unionists this year, national attention was especially brought to those of Guillermo Rivera Fúquene, President of Sinservpub, whose body was discovered on 15th July at Ibagué, three months after he disappeared in the sector of Tunal, Bogota; and of Leonidas Gómez Roso, employee at the City Bank and leader of the National Union of Bank Workers (UNEB). He was assassinated on 7th March in Bogota, just one day after the national march against paramilitarism and all forms of violence, in which he participated as an activist.

A further murder that comes to mind occurred on 1st April in Valle del Guamez, Putumayo, where Luz Mariela Díaz López, who was pregnant, was killed. She was a member of the Educators' Association of Putumayo. At the same time, Emerson Iván Herrera, another unionist, was also killed.

The 38 assassinations form part of the 200 trade union rights violations that so far this year have been committed against the lives, liberty and integrity of unionised workers, and which include threats, arbitrary detention, forced disappearances, attacks, and other forms of victimisation.

The Trade Union Centre CUT has been the most affected by the spate of crimes. Of the 38 assassinated, 29 were members of this national centre. Another five were members of the CGT national centre, and four from other organisations.

The most affected union is the Fensuagro (National trade union federation of agricultural workers), member of CUT, which counts five cases of murder of its members. It is followed by the Trade union of education workers of Valle (Sutep), with four members killed. Both the Association of education workers of North Santander and the Trade union of IMPEC workers recorded three cases of murder of their members.

It is important to draw attention to the grade of impunity that is surrounding these crimes, which, according to available information, have until now only seen two people detained.

Many threats in Santander

A further cause for concern is the increased number of death threats received by trade unionists, especially in the area of Santander. While the total for the country up until now is of 125 cases of threats, 57 of them are in the area of Santander, which represents almost half of the national total in that area alone.

The other areas that are most affected by threats are Antioquia, where there have been 22 cases, Valle del Cauca with nine cases and North Santander with seven cases.

List of trade unionists assassinated in 2008

The complete list of trade unionists assassinated in Colombia from 1st January 2008 until the date of this report is as follows:

NAME OF TRADE UNIONIST	DATE	MUNICIPALITY	NAME OF UNION
ZULUAGA MARIO	02-01-08	MEDELLIN	ASMEDAS
PÉREZ MONTES ISRAEL ANDRÉS	11-01-08	VALLEDUPAR	SINTRADRUMMOND
PÉREZ ZAPATA RAMIRO DE JESÚS	12-01-08	SAN JERONIMO	ADIDA
GONZÁLES ISRAEL	24-01-08	SAN ANTONIO	FENSUAGRO
SUÁREZ LEAL JOSÉ YEBRAIL	28-01-08	BELLO	SIGGINPEC
DUARTE ACERO JOSE MARTIN	02-02-08	LA MACARENA	SINTRAMBIENTE
MESA PASACHOA MARIA DEL CARMEN	08-02-08	TAME	ASEDAR
TRUJILLO MARIA TERESA	09-02-08	SANTANDER DE QUILICHAO	ASOINCA
BENAVIDEZ SAMBONI ARLEY	09-02-08	BALBOA	ANTHOC
GIRALDO MAMIÁN JOSÉ	09-02-08	LA VEGA	ASOINCA
CARVAJAL RAMÍREZ CARMEN CECILIA	04-03-08	OCANA	ASINORT
GOMEZ ALZATE GILDARDO ANTONIO	07-03-08	MEDELLIN	ADIDA
GÓMEZ ROZO LEONIDAS	08-03-08	BOGOTA	UNEB
MUÑOZ BENAVIDEZ VÍCTOR MANUEL	12-03-08	AGUSTIN CODAZZI	ADUCESAR
BURBANO CARLOS	12-03-08	SAN VICENTE DEL CAGUÁN	ANTHOC
JIMÉNEZ MANUEL ANTONIO	15-03-08	PUERTO ASIS	FENSUAGRO
QUIROZ JOSE FERNANDO	16-03-08	PUERTO ASIS	FENSUAGRO
ASTROS AMAYA JOSÉ GREGORIO	18-03-08	CARTAGO	ASEINPEC
GONZÁLEZ MONTES ADOLFO	22-03-08	RIOHACHA	SINTRACARBON
TROCHEZ PEÑA JULIO CÉSAR	22-03-08	SEVILLA	SUTEV
HERRERA RUALES EMERSON IVÁN	01-04-08	VALLE DEL GUAMUEZ	ASEP
DÍAZ LÓPEZ LUZ MARIELA	01-04-08	VALLE DEL GUAMUEZ	ASEP
LEAL MEDINA RAFAEL ANTONIO	04-04-08	ARMERO	AICA
ARIZA OMAR	07-04-08	SEVILLA	SUTEV
GUTIERREZ RUIZ LUIS ENRIQUE	15-04-08	TAUSA	SINDESENA

NAME OF TRADE UNIONIST	DATE	MUNICIPALITY	NAME OF UNION
CABALLERO ARIZA JESÚS HEBERTO	18-04-08	BARRANQUILLA	SINDESENA
RIVERA FUNEQUE GUILLERMO	28-04-08	IBAGUE	SINSERV PUB BTA
CHIQUILLO PASCUALES TOMÁS ALBERTO	10-05-08	ALGARROBO	SINTRAPROACEITES SUR DEL CESAR
GELVES LUIS ORLANDO	11-05-08	TAME	FENSUAGRO
VERGARA SÁNCHEZ MARCELO	05-06-08	BUGA	SUTEV
PELÁEZ CASTAÑO FAVIER DARIO	13-06-08	CAICEDONIA	ASEINPEC
RECALDE ORDÓÑEZ WALTER ANIBAL	19-06-08	BUGA	ASEINPEC
MUÑOZ GUARÍN JOSE HUMBERTO	22-06-08	RESTREPO	SUTEV
MENDOZA CARREÑO HALY MARTÍN	09-07-08	CUCUTA	ASINORT
PALOMEQUE VALENCIA JESÚS	05-08-08	CUCUTA	ASINORT
MAYUSA PRADA LUIS	08-08-08	SARAVENA	CUT
GAMBOA MELÉNDEZ MANUEL EMIRSON	13-08-08	PUERTO ASIS	FENSUAGRO
GALEANO MARTÍNEZ JOSÉ OMAR	23-08-08	BUGA	FECOLOT

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