

USLEAP

Spring 2011:
Issue #1

Fighting for worker justice in the global economy



Members of the United Steelworkers in Chicago march in solidarity with Mexican workers for the Global Days of Action, held from February 14 to 19, 2011. Groups in more than 40 cities held rallies at Mexican embassies to push for greater respect for worker rights. (photo credit: United Steelworkers)

Administration Presses Forward on Colombian Trade Agreement Despite No Drop in Murder Rates

The Obama Administration is giving every indication that it plans to push forward the long-pending Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Colombia this year, despite the fact that in 2010 Colombia again led the world in the number of trade unionists assassinated. The level of assassinations has remained virtually unchanged over the past three years. In 2010, 51 trade unionists were murdered, compared to 47 in 2009 and 52 in 2008, all up from 39 in 2007.

During the 2008 presidential debates, candidate Barack Obama voiced opposition to the Colombia FTA, citing violence against trade unionists. After coming into office, the Administration announced it would set benchmarks that Colombia would need to meet before advancing the Colombia FTA, but if the Administration has set benchmarks, they remain unknown to the public. Last year the Administration reiterated that Colombia would need to make progress on violence and impunity before the

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Death Threats Target Mexican NGO Supporting Johnson Controls Workers

Violence has escalated against the primary Mexican worker center supporting organizing efforts at two Johnson Controls, Inc. (JCI) factories in Puebla, Mexico.

On December 20, 2010, unidentified robbers broke into the offices of the Center for Worker Support (CAT) and scrawled the following message on a wall: "YOU DON'T KNOW WHO YOU'RE MESSING WITH." The intruders also hacked into the e-mail address of CAT Executive Director Blanca Velázquez and the CAT institutional account, stole paper and electronic documents, and destroyed equipment, causing more than \$16,000 in damage.

Then, on January 11, 2011, the

intimidators sent a death threat to the CAT team through the hacked CAT institutional e-mail account, describing in detail an earlier violent attack on an activist in Mexico, Digna Ochoa, who was killed in 2001 as a result of her human rights work: "KIDNAPPING OF DIGNA OCHOA: In October of 1999 various subjects entered her home, gagged her, blindfolded her and interrogated her during approximately nine hours, to then abandon her tied to her bed by her hands and feet, next to an open gas tank. She

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*Some organizations listed for
identification only

New Fact Sheets Published by USLEAP

Have you visited the USLEAP website recently? USLEAP has been busy writing and updating a host of new materials, including:

Colombia:

- *Murder and Impunity of Colombian Trade Unionists Fact Sheet*
- *Summary Bullet Points from New Report: "Impunity and the Violation of the Human Rights of Trade Unionists in Colombia, 2009-2010 and 2002-2010"*
- *Opposing a Colombian FTA: Talking Points on Violence Against Trade Unionists and Impunity*
- *Alvaro Uribe: Violence and Impunity Against Trade Unionists, 2002-2010*

Honduras:

- *Honduran Labor Rights Update September-December 2010*
- *Honduran Labor Rights Update January 2011*

Guatemala:

- *Murder and Impunity of Guatemalan Trade Unionists*

CAFTA:

- *Labor Protections and the Dominican Republic-Central America Free Trade Agreement (DR-CAFTA)*

NAFTA:

- *Labor, Immigration, and the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)*

To request a copy of any of the fact sheets listed above, write P.O. Box 268-290, Chicago, IL 60626 or send an e-mail to rvanhorn@usleap.org.

Board Departures

USLEAP bids adieu to two board members and wishes to express deep appreciation for their voluntary service on the board:

Ron Oswald, General Secretary, International Union of Foodworkers (IUF). USLEAP has worked with the IUF for many years, often with IUF representa-

tion on the board. Mr. Oswald served one two-year term and, despite being based in Geneva, Switzerland, was able to participate in several board meetings. The IUF represents food, hotel, and agricultural unions around the world who together represent over 12 million members.

Alan Spaulding, Director of Global Strategies, United Food and Commercial Workers Union. Mr. Spaulding served many terms on the board, dating back to the 1990s when we were still the U.S./Guatemala Labor Education in the Americas Project (US/GLEP). Perhaps his most lasting contribution to the organization, in addition to securing generous financial support, was coining the current name USLEAP when US/GLEP expanded its support for workers beyond Guatemala. ©

The U.S. Labor Education in the Americas Project is an independent non-profit organization that supports the basic rights of workers in Latin America, especially those who are employed directly or indirectly by U.S. companies. USLEAP is funded by individuals, foundations, trade unions, and religious groups. This newsletter is published four times a year. A minimum (tax-deductible) contribution of \$35 a year is requested; \$10 for students/low income.

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Mexican NGO...

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was able to free herself and tried calling the police, but the line had been cut.”

The recent acts of intimidation add to months of violence directed at the CAT, reportedly linked to their support for worker organizing at the two JCI plants, Resurrection and FINSA, where CAT and independent workers have been seeking to eject company-backed protection unions and establish collective bargaining agreements. On August 9, 2010, three members of the CAT doing fieldwork at FINSA were threatened and surrounded by masked men who told the workers to inform Ms. Velásquez that if she continued to “mess with CROM,” the protection union at the JCI FINSA plant, “there would be consequences.” On August 16, JCI union leaders at the Resurrection plant were beaten and held hostage for more than seven hours when the company let thugs into the factory who were associated with the Confederation of Union Organizations (COS), the protection union at the JCI Interiors/Resurrection plant at the time.

May and August 2010 Agreements

JCI agreed to recognize the Mineros (Mineworkers) as an independent union at the Resurrection plant following a strike over Memorial Day weekend in 2010, but failed to uphold the agreement. On August 24, following the August 16 violence and another strike, JCI signed an agreement recognizing the Mineros as the sole representative union in the plant, kicking out the COS protection union, and providing support for workers who had been subject to violence. At presstime, the union and the CAT reported that JCI has failed to adequately comply with this agreement as well.

Although the perpetrators of the recent threats and burglary remain unidentified, CAT staff believe that the recent violence is connected to their work supporting JCI workers, specifically opposition from the CROM, which is still at the JCI FINSA plant.

Johnson Controls, the largest company in Wisconsin, has shifted production to Mexico in recent years as a result of the opening of U.S.-Mexican trade

barriers, initiated in 1994 by the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). While JCI has closed at least 16 plants in the U.S. since 2006, it continues to operate plants in the U.S., some of which are represented by the United Auto Workers and Steelworkers. It now operates 30 factories in Mexico, three of which are located in Puebla. The company has received additional attention recently as a result of the \$10,000 that Johnson Controls CEO Stephen Roll contributed to Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker’s campaign.

Coalition Presses Government

In spite of the continued risk for the CAT staff, with Ms. Velásquez going abroad for several weeks over concerns for her safety, Mexican authorities have not responded adequately to the attacks. An international coalition of unions and solidarity organizations, including USLEAP, the United Auto Workers, the United Steelworkers, the Maquila Solidarity Network, and the AFL-CIO’s Solidarity Center, have joined together to pressure the Mexican government to carry out a thorough investigation into the threats, to bring to justice those responsible, and to provide precautionary measures to protect the CAT staff.

On January 18, USLEAP contacted U.S. government officials and sent out an action alert directed to Mexican authorities that generated over 400 e-mails. USLEAP and several U.S. unions also contacted JCI directly in January, asking the company to pressure the Mexican authorities to respond to the threats, disassociate themselves from and denounce the violence, and work towards establishing the collective bargaining agreement agreed upon in August. In a February 22, 2011 letter to USLEAP, JCI Vice President Jerome Okarma said the company was sorry to hear about the “unfortunate incidents” and doesn’t condone violence but declined the request to intervene with local authorities. JCI also claimed it was abiding by the August 2010 agreement.

On January 21, 2011, the Mexico-based Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Project (ProDESC), with the support of 47 organizations from the

U.S., Mexico and Canada, submitted a letter requesting that the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) pressure the Mexican authorities to act. A number of other groups have since added their support. The IACHR is an autonomous branch of the Organization of the American States (OAS) that is focused on protecting human rights in all OAS member states.

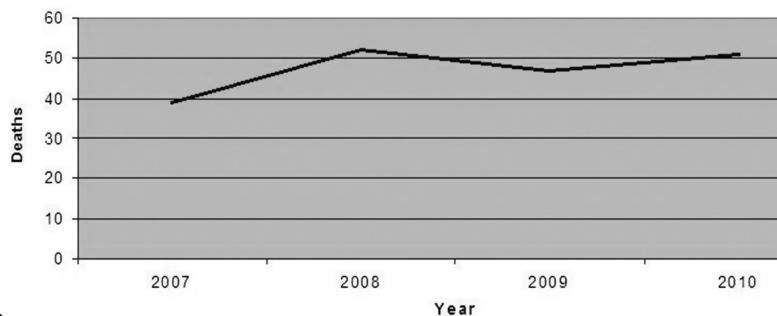
International Unions Rally for Mexico

Support for the CAT comes at a time of increasing international solidarity for labor rights in Mexico. From February 14 to 19, 2011, independent trade unions in Mexico teamed up with unions affiliated with the International Metalworkers’ Federation (IMF), which has been heavily involved in the JCI campaign, the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions (ICEM), the International Transport Workers’ Federation (ITF), UNI Global Union (UNI), and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) to celebrate the Global Days of Action in Mexico. Groups in more than forty countries held rallies at Mexican embassies and consulates and met with Mexican ambassadors to discuss the systemic violation of labor rights perpetrated by the Mexican government.

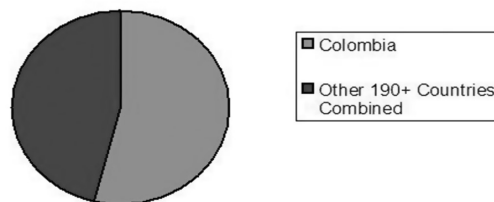
The Days of Action commemorates the fifth anniversary of an explosion at a coal mine that killed 65 workers, of whom 63 remain buried, on February 19, 2006. Families of the victims have still not been adequately compensated. The campaign calls upon the Mexican government to hold accountable those responsible for the explosion at the mine and, more broadly, take steps to ensure respect for worker rights, including an end to company-backed “protection contracts” that block the establishment of democratic unions, an end to the use of violence by the state or private parties to repress the formation of democratic unions, and an end to the political persecution levied against the Mexican Miners’ and Metalworkers’ Union (SNT-MMSRM) and the Mexican Electrical Workers’ Union (SME). ©

Number of Colombian Trade Unionists Killed, 2007-2010

Source: Escuela Nacional Sindical (ENS), Colombia



Percentage of Colombian Trade Unionists Killed Compared to World (2005-2009)



In spite of recent press touting a reduction in violence against trade unionists in Colombia, the statistics show that little has changed in the last four years. (credit: USLEAP)

Colombian FTA...

continued from front page

FTA could be considered.

Administration officials have begun arguing that the Colombian government has made significant progress in reducing violence and impunity, a mantra the news media has accepted uncritically.

No Progress on Impunity Either

USLEAP's December 2010 impunity report, a comprehensive assessment of the most recent data available found that there has been no net progress on impunity, with the number of trade unionists murdered in 2009 (47) exceeding the number of new convictions for murders achieved in 2009 (41); most other forms of violence are completely ignored by the judicial system.

Two leading Colombian NGOs, the Escuela Nacional Sindical and Colombian Commission of Jurists, have released their 2010 annual report on violence and impunity which underscore the Colombian government's lack of progress. Among other findings:

- The level of impunity in the cases of violence against trade union rights is 98.36%, as reported by the Colombian government;
- A special Labor Subunit, established in 2007 to focus on violence against trade unionists, is investigating only 3.2% of acts of violence committed against trade unionists between 1986 and 2010; and

- Between the January 1, 1986 and August 30, 2010, 2,842 trade unionists were murdered.

The report and a short summary are available in English on the USLEAP website or by request from the office.

A February visit to Washington, DC by Colombian Vice President Angelino Garzón has provided new momentum for reviving the Colombia FTA. The Vice President was a persuasive advocate, being a former head of Colombia's largest union body and former Minister of Labor (before the Ministry was eliminated and replaced by the Ministry of Social Protection, under which Labor is subsumed). Vice President Garzón met with human rights groups, members of Congress critical of the agreement, and U.S. unions, including Teamster President James P. Hoffa (who gave him a copy of the latest USLEAP impunity report).

Colombia to Address Subcontracting

In his visit to Washington, Vice President Garzón reported that the new government was taking steps to address one of labor's primary concerns, subcontracting. Subcontracting has spread to sectors like flowers where it is used to stymie unions and lower wages and benefits compared to permanent workers. According to the AFL-CIO, the Colombian government's measure would sharply rein in subcontracting, but its delayed implementation date of 2013 is a significant cause of concern. Nevertheless, the Vice President's messaging demonstrated that the govern-

ment understands that concerns about labor rights in Colombia are not limited to violence but extend to basic law and core worker rights.

The Colombia FTA was negotiated in 2006 but has been blocked due primarily to concerns about violence against trade unionists. Opponents and skeptics of free trade agreements (FTAs) also cite its expected negative impact on small farmers, Afro-Colombians, health care and loss of sovereignty, and oppose the economic model it represents, essentially an extension of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Republicans Push for Vote Now

The Administration is pushing forward three Bush-era FTAs, starting with South Korea, to be followed by Colombia and Panama, likely later this year. Congressional Republicans are demanding that the Administration package the three FTAs into one vote now, and to force the issue in February, they blocked the renewal of an economic and training package for U.S. workers displaced by trade. House Republicans also allowed long-standing trade benefits for Andean countries to expire in early 2011 to pressure the Administration to bring the Colombia FTA to a quicker vote.

Violence, CAFTA and Guatemala

Even as the Administration says it wants to push forward a FTA with the world's most dangerous country in which to be a trade unionist, the U.S.

Trade Representative (USTR) has yet to declare that the murder of a trade unionist is considered a violation of worker rights subject to the legal procedures of current FTAs.

Last summer USTR and the U.S. Department of Labor finally asked for consultations with the Guatemalan government to discuss the labor complaint filed in April 2008 by the AFL-CIO and six Guatemalan trade unions, marking the first labor complaint submitted under CAFTA (Central America Free Trade Agreement). In their letter to the Guatemalan government asking for consultations, USTR and the Department of Labor said the Administration was “also” concerned about violence against trade unionists, implying that violence is outside the formal CAFTA process, even though the complaint itself includes cases of violence.

USLEAP unsuccessfully pressed for a clarification on the issue in a phone conversation with a USTR official. Sen. Sherrod Brown, D-OH, subsequently wrote USTR requesting an explanation of how USTR treats violence against trade unionists under FTAs, looking specifically at its handling of the Guatemala labor complaint and noting its implications for consideration of the Colombia FTA. In a February 18, 2011 letter to Sen. Brown, USTR Ron Kirk

refused to state that violence against trade unionists is a labor rights violation under CAFTA’s purview.

USLEAP has consistently pointed out that violence against trade unionists in Guatemala has surged since implementation of CAFTA in 2006, arguing that Congress and the Administration should consider the implications for Colombia should Congress pass an FTA. USTR’s handling of the Guatemala complaint raises new concerns that murdering trade unionists may not even be considered a worker rights violation under CAFTA.

Peru Test?

Critics of the Administration’s push for new FTAs argue that it is imperative to test the new, improved labor conditions agreed upon in May 2007 in negotiations between the Bush Administration and Democrats. The revised standards were intended to pave the way for votes on the trade agreements negotiated with Korea, Peru, Panama and Colombia, but only the agreement with Peru has been approved and implemented. (As senator, Mr. Obama voted against CAFTA but for the Peru FTA, in part on the grounds that the labor protections are stronger).

While the labor conditions are clearly an improvement over CAFTA, they have not been tested and USLEAP,

among others, is skeptical of their effectiveness. To date, USLEAP’s experience is that the labor protections of CAFTA are significantly weaker than what they replaced, the worker rights conditions of trade preference programs, e.g. the Generalized System of Preferences. ©

Lawsuits in Jeopardy

Worker rights advocates may be in danger of losing another source of leverage as a result of a U.S. court ruling in 2010 that could end the use of the Alien Tort Claims Act to bring lawsuits against U.S. companies for acts of violence against workers abroad. While virtually none of the lawsuits have yet been successful in winning compensation for the victims and plaintiffs, they have been useful in putting pressure on companies, e.g. Dole, Chiquita, Coca-Cola, and Drummond in Colombia.

In November 2010, a U.S. District Court dismissed a separate lawsuit filed against Coca-Cola on behalf of two Guatemalan trade unionists, essentially telling the plaintiffs to first use the Guatemalan court system. USLEAP provided considerable support to one of the plaintiffs, José Armando Palacios, who had to flee the country in early 2006 after nearly being shot to death. ©

USAS, WRC...

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The WRC achieved another advance in early 2011 when it persuaded apparel brands to push a Honduran supplier to reverse course and disavow a common union-busting strategy in Latin America. Workers organizing independent unions are frequently faced with the sudden emergence of a “union” that quickly signs a contract with management to ward off the independent union. The Commission for the Verification of Codes of Conduct (COVERCO) conducted an investigation of the plant, Pinehurst. Its clients, including Nike, addidas, Liz Claiborne, and Phillips-Van Heusen, were asked to intervene. Pinehurst was persuaded to reinstate fired workers, reject the illegitimate union, and bargain with the legitimate union, SitraPinehurst. ©



Secretary of State Hillary Clinton speaks with Colombian Vice-President Angelino Garzón at a press conference in Washington, DC on January 28, 2011. Both reiterated their support for a free trade agreement between Colombia and the U.S. (photo credit: Just the Facts)

Colombia Celebrates International Day of the Flower Worker; Strikes Continue



Flower workers in Colombia celebrate the International Day of the Flower Workers on February 14. The largest Colombian flower company, Floramerica-Sunburst, continues to deny its employees pay and benefits, and many workers have moved into their third month of striking. (photo credit: International Labor Rights Forum)

On February 14, while many in the U.S. were celebrating Valentine's Day, Colombian workers joined in solidarity for the annual celebration of the International Day of the Flower Worker. Every year flower workers gather to recognize their hard work and discuss plans to fight for improved wages and working conditions.

In 2010 alone, flower workers and union leaders linked to the House of the Flower Workers (Casa de las y los Trabajadores), a project of the Colombian United Center of Workers (CUT), created a new group called the National Organization of Flowers (ONOF), established a "flower union house" in Facatativá, a town near flower plantations, educated and trained flower workers and union leaders, published a free newsletter called "*La Espinita*" (The Thorn), conducted weekly radio programs, investigated health and safety concerns, and provided free legal advice to workers.

Nevertheless, conditions are abysmal, efforts to organize blocked, and workers remain on strike at Colombia's largest flower company, Floramerica-Sunburst, over its failure to pay wages and legally-required benefits. Colom-

bian unions continue to fear that the company, which took over Dole's flower operations in 2009 and employs 8,000 workers, will use the current financial crisis as an opportunity to replace permanent workers with contract laborers who have virtually no legal protection and who cannot form a union.

The most recent strikes began on November 16, 2010 when flower workers at the Guacarí plantation in Zipaquirá, Colombia, near Bogotá, went on strike in response to Floramerica's failure to pay salaries and benefits, including social security and health insurance. Unionized Guacarí workers resigned on December 1 after they were beaten and intimidated by thugs brought in by the company, and were then replaced by contract workers. On the same day, workers at several of the company's other plantations went on strike, which continued at presstime.

According to Colombian flower unions, social certifications have not yet made much difference for key worker issues. Floramerica proudly touted its certification by Rainforest Alliance on

its website, but when worker rights violations at the company were brought to the attention of Rainforest Alliance by USLEAP and the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) and raised with Floramerica, the company decided to opt out of certification rather than address the violations. Flower worker unions in Colombia also report that a Fair Trade label does not at this point in time ensure a better work environment. Nevertheless, flower workers are not asking U.S. consumers to boycott; unless it is a part of a larger strategic campaign, boycotting would put jobs at risk without necessarily improving working conditions.

In an indication that the violation of the rights of flower workers is gaining attention from U.S. policy makers, thanks in part to the work of USLEAP and ILRF, the ranking minority member of the Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Sander Levin (D-Michigan) met with flower union representatives on his trip to Colombia in January to learn first-hand about working conditions. U.S. consumers spend over \$18 billion annually on flowers, 60% of which are imported from Colombia. The Colombian flower sector employs nearly 100,000 workers and is a primary beneficiary of U.S. trade benefits. ©

New Chiquita Campaign?

Banana unions in Latin America have threatened to launch a new international campaign against Chiquita this spring unless the company addresses a range of issues, including conflicts in Guatemala and Costa Rica. The Coordination of Latin American Banana Workers Unions (COLSIBA) has conveyed its threat to the company and begun lining up support from USLEAP and the European Banana Action Network (EUROBAN) for a campaign in the U.S. and Europe.

In 2001, COLSIBA and the Interna-

tional Union of Foodworkers signed a path-breaking worker rights framework agreement with Chiquita following an international campaign led in the U.S. by USLEAP and in Europe by EUROBAN. The agreement provides for bi-annual meetings of the three parties to address labor conflicts that have not been resolved by unions at the national level. COLSIBA members have periodically criticized the agreement but have generally agreed that they've been better off with than without it, and sought similar agreements with other companies.

At the request of two COLSIBA members, the Unsitragua union in Guatemala and Chiquita union leader Ramón Barrantes in Costa Rica, USLEAP intervened with Chiquita in late January 2011. Unsitragua says Chiquita violated an agreement signed late last year under which Chiquita agreed to rehabilitate unionized farms on the Atlantic coast damaged by storms. Unsitragua says that Chiquita violated the agreement by hiring temporary workers while suspending union members.

Chiquita argues that the union got a good deal because the company could have saved millions of dollars in rehab costs and moved more sourcing to the non-union south (Pacific) coast of Guatemala, potentially costing 2,000 union workers their jobs on the Atlantic side.

Costa Rican union leaders charge Chiquita with anti-union firings; Chiquita says layoffs have been non-discriminatory.

Over the last few years, Dole has been public enemy number one for COLSIBA, but that may change in 2011 unless resolutions are reached soon.

Steep Challenges for Unions

Meanwhile, efforts to organize the unorganized plantations in Ecuador and the south coast of Guatemala remain blocked, providing transnationals and retailers a ready supply of non-union bananas where workers are typically

paid a fraction of what union workers make (e.g. \$3 a day versus \$10 a day) and have no benefits (typically worth about \$10 a day for unionized workers). Unionized production has fallen over the past decade despite the 2001 worker rights framework agreement with Chiquita, the most unionized of the banana transnationals, but probably would have fallen much faster without it.

Chiquita claims that it is under increasing price pressure from retailers, and that some (e.g. Wal-Mart) are beginning to buy directly from banana growers in the region. Overproduction continues to plague the industry, and new changes in the European market mandated by the World Trade Organization have increased competition and lowered profit margins.

These trends do not bode well for unionized, higher-cost bananas. While the multi-stakeholder World Banana Forum recognizes these trends and is discussing the need to address them, banana unions in Latin America need action sooner rather than later.

On March 8, 2011, **International Women's Day**, COLSIBA and its allies, including USLEAP, sent a message to the three major banana transnationals Dole, Chiquita and Fresh Del Monte, demanding that they end discriminatory treatment of women workers and engage in real social dialogue with the union movement. ©

USAS Holds Week of Action; Worker Rights Consortium Gains Another Advance

The United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) held a nationwide week of action February 21-25, 2011 in order to press schools to "make a genuine commitment to the only unionized, living wage factory that complies with universities' codes of conduct, Alta Gracia." Most college logo apparel continues to be made in sweatshops. USAS is urging schools to increase orders from Alta Gracia and to "affiliate with the independent factory monitor, the Worker Rights Consortium (WRC) and disaffiliate with the corporate-run Fair Labor Association (FLA)."

Knight Industries established Alta Gracia, a factory in the Dominican Republic, in 2010 following student organizing initiated by USAS and worker organizing led by the free-trade zone union federation FEDOTRAZONAS. Alta Gracia's unionized workers earn more than three and a half times the local industry standard. The workers were formerly employed by the BJ&B factory, which closed after years of an organizing struggle that was supported by USAS, USLEAP, and others.

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Dear USLEAP supporters:

I never cease to be amazed by those activists who follow USLEAP's work (often for over a decade), and gradually become more invested in the issues, while strengthening their support of USLEAP. Your contributions make our work possible, and that deserves our sincere gratitude, **thank you!** Recently, we heard from some who wish to forego unnecessary waste and receive fewer mailings each year. If you prefer to receive fewer mailings, please consider becoming a **recurring donor**. When making a donation through our website, simply choose the amount and frequency (monthly, 3 months, 6 months, annually) of your gift, and the rest is taken care of. You can, of course, choose to discontinue your gifts at any time. This simple, efficient way of giving saves on environmental waste, printing costs, and is enormously helpful to funding our work throughout the year. Consider it!

Mil gracias,
Maria Demopoulos
USLEAP Development Associate

Debate Continues Over Honduran Elections; Militarization Intensifies

Protests marred the one-year anniversary of President Porfirio Lobo's entrance into office, with members of the National Peoples' Resistance Front (NPRF) and associated organizations, backed by the Honduran trade union movement, marching throughout Honduras from January 26 to 28, 2011.

The most recent objections to President Lobo's reign come from the announcement that both President Lobo and Parliament Speaker Juan Orlando Hernandez support a measure that would allow referendums on the Honduran Constitution, including changes to re-elections and term limits. When ousted-President Manuel Zelaya attempted to promote a constituent assembly to take similar steps, the military and the political right staged a coup in 2009 accusing him of seeking to extend his presidency. Now that President Lobo seeks what Zelaya was accused of, those who staged the 2009 overthrow have remained silent.

Meanwhile, on February 27 over 1500 delegates from all municipalities, representing more than 300 organizations, met in the first general assembly of the People's National Resistance Front. The assembly ratified ex-President Manuel Zelaya as Coordinator of the FNRP and Juan Barahona as Deputy Co-

ordinator, and voted almost unanimously to abstain from the 2013 electoral process. Xiomara Castro, ousted President Manuel Zelaya's wife, articulated the sentiment of the group, saying that, "The conditions are not right to go to an electoral process. To do that would require that the coup-mongers leave power and are punished."



Protestors march in opposition to the one-year anniversary of Honduran President Porfirio "Pepe" Lobo's inauguration on January 27, 2011. (photo credit: Friendship Office of the Americas)

Instead, the FNRP will continue to push for a peoples-based National Constituent Assembly to revise the Constitution to improve respect for basic rights. In the fall of 2010, the movement collected more than 1.3 million signatures calling for the process to begin.

Teachers and Campesinos Targeted as U.S. Militarization Continues

As a result of its opposition to the privatization of education and its strong leadership role in the FNRP, teachers' unions have faced increasing repression since President Lobo came to power. In late December, the Association of Secondary Teachers of Honduras announced that its office had been taken over by the military. On December 30, José Luis Sanabria, a teacher who was active in the labor movement and resistance, was kidnapped and found dead two days later. On February 21, some 350 teachers protesting in the coastal city of La Ceiba were beaten and tear-gassed, and many were detained. Members of the military and police illegally entered homes in order to arrest teachers, and one leader in the movement, Franklin Padilla, was detained and remains missing.

In spite of the repression and lack of legitimacy, the U.S. continues to push for readmission of the Honduran government into the Organization of American States (OAS) and has expanded its military presence in the region. Since the 2009 coup, the U.S. has reportedly built two new military bases, increased police training, and, on December 27, announced that it will operate drones from the joint air force base at Palmerola.

U.S. Secretary of the Army John McHugh also traveled to Honduras in January to reaffirm U.S. military support to "promote regional security," particularly in relation to drug trafficking.

In order to support the Honduran labor movement and its opposition to the de facto coup government of President Porfirio Lobo, USLEAP has begun to publish a monthly Honduran Labor Rights Update, available on the website (www.usleap.org) and by mail, per request. ©

We would like to recognize the critical support provided by the following unions and foundations in 2010:

General Service Foundation
Landau Family Foundation
Rothschild Foundation
Service Employees International Union
Solidarity Center (AFL-CIO)
21st Century ILGWU Heritage Fund
United Auto Workers
United Steelworkers of America
Workers United/SEIU, Chicago and Midwest Regional Joint Board

Individuals continue to provide the majority of our funding but support from unions and foundations is also critical to our work.

Thanks to all who supported our work in 2010!