

SUPPORT FOR COLOMBIAN TRADE UNIONISTS

WHEREAS:

Colombian trade unions face some of the most difficult conditions of any labor movement in the world, including systematic violence and assassination by armed groups - three out of five trade unionists killed worldwide are from Colombia. In 2000, at least 112 union members and leaders were murdered. In 2001, 184 were murdered, and by July 2002, 93 union members and leaders were murdered. According to the United Nations and trade union leaders, the vast majority of killings and attacks on labor leader are committed by paramilitaries (private armies aligned with the Colombian military and anti-worker interests); and,

WHEREAS:

Colombian public sector union members have been particularly hard hit by violent attacks - teachers and health care workers have lost the highest number of members and leaders to assassination; and

WHEREAS:

Public sector workers struggle against plans to decentralize funding of education and health care services. These plans would dismiss thousands of municipal employees and increasingly leave these services in the hands of private interests. The International Monetary Fund, corporations, and backers of free trade agreements such as the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas are pushing this model of privatization on the Colombian public sector; and

WHEREAS:

With \$1.6 billion in aid to "Plan Colombia," under the pretense of fighting the production and trafficking of illegal drugs, our government is now involved financially and militarily in this 38-year-old conflict that has taken the lives of tens of thousands of people.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:

District 1199P/SEIU supports the work of our sisters and brothers from Colombia who are in this country because of threats upon their lives, and we support their efforts to educate union members and the U. S. public about the violence against Colombian trade union members and plans to privatize vital public services in Colombia;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT:

District 1199P/SEIU will call upon the leadership from SEIU and the AFL-CIO to work with Congress to ensure that U.S. policy toward Colombia:

1. Ties any U.S. assistance to Colombia to an insistence that human rights conditions be met by the Colombian government;
2. Requires the Colombian government to take action to sever links between its military forces and the paramilitaries, to arrest and prosecute the killers of union members and other civilians, and to provide enhanced protection for defenders of labor and human rights by withholding aid unless significant progress is made on these issues;
3. Provides assistance for humanitarian purposes and for the development and reactivation of the Colombian economy;
4. Supports efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the military conflict.

District 1199P/SEIU Leadership Assembly September 2002