

The Profiteers Bulletin

Ending Canadian corporate impunity in Colombia

January 2016



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REMISO! Resistance against the militarization of society!

REMISO is the name of a campaign organized by the National Association of the Youth and Students of Colombia (ANJECO). This campaign aims at denouncing the militarization of society and supports the voices of those that object to doing their military service. The term *remiso* also indicates the reluctance to do something and more specifically names those who refuse to participate in their military service and don't present themselves to that obligation.

Batidas

Still nowadays, the military service is obligatory in Colombia for men over 18 years old. Going against the political views of many young people, different means are used to get away from this obligation. To avoid these withdrawals, the Army organizes what we call «*batidas*»

presented themselves to their military service. These sequestrations are often correlated with physical and mental abuses.

Conscientious objectors

To the obligation to present themselves to the military service, the individuals of 18 years of age and more can object to their participation due to a mental or physical invalidity as well as other predetermined exemptions.

Conscientious objection is: « refusing to accomplish certain acts going against religious, moral or ethical imperatives dictated by one's conscience.» It can imply the refusal of transporting fire arms. This concept is based on the right of freedom of conscience and freedom to decide your own acts, but can imply civil disobedience, such

as in the case of refusing to participate in your military service, which is an obligation in the Colombian Constitution.

It is possible to declare oneself a conscientious ob-

jector before the age of 18, while being 18 or any time after, including while serving in the military.



where trucks come into the towns and illegally take away young men of 18 years and above that have not

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The conscientious objection is a right that is recognized at article 18 of the Colombian Constitution that indicates that freedom of conscience is guaranteed. «No one will be bothered due to his or her convictions or beliefs, nor is obligated to reveal them or act against their conscience. » This interpretation has been supported in 2009 with the judgement C-728 of the Constitutional Court and the United Nations have confirmed that the objection of conscience is a right recognized by international norms.

Solidarity

We invite all national and international organizations, collectives and movements to:

Support the REMISO campaign coordinated by ANJE-CO;

Denounce the use of batidas as an illegal recruitment mechanism for the military service;

Support the recognition of the legitimacy to be conscientious objectors.

Source: PASC, December 7th, 2015

Impunity one year after the assassination of civil society leader Carlos Pedraza

On January 19, one year will have passed since the assassination of political and civil society leader Carlos Alberto Pedraza Salcedo. He was known for his support for civil society processes in the southern neighbourhoods of Bogotá. As the government affirms that the conflict is near its end, the perpetrators of this crime remain unpunished.

Carlos Pedraza disappeared in Bogotá. On January 21, his body appeared in Gachancipá, a municipality 60 km north of Bogotá. The Colombian Forensic Medicine Institute established that his death was caused by a "firearm projectile [causing] a lesion of the skull from back to front... and produced by a low- speed weapon." This assassination began a year in which 399 cases of human rights violations against social movement leaders were recorded, arousing national and international indignation.

The legal case

Since the moment when the National Police found Carlos' body, information concerning his death has been sporadic. When members of the Judicial Investigation Section (Sijin) found his body on the morning of January 21, they made calls to locate his family. They told family members that Carlos had had a motorcycle accident. They ultimately changed their story, telling

the family that Carlos "was found dead in the pines with a strong blow to the head." These contradictory versions given by government officials were only the first of many irregularities concerning this case.

Carlos' case was filed with the First District Attorney of Zipaquirá, where the Immediate Response Unit and the Sijn were in charge of the investigation. Due to the apparent political motive behind the assassination, the legal team asked for the case to be transferred to the National Human Rights and International Humanitarian Rights Unit of the Attorney General of Colombia. This request was successful, and the case is now being investigated by the Human Rights Unit of Office 98. However,



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little progress has been made, and there have been many impediments. 2015 was a difficult year for the social movements, with Carlos Pedraza's case being only one among many recorded this year. Furthermore, the Human Rights Unit is aware that the District Attorney refused to give Carlos's advocates any information or to assist them in prosecuting the case.

This crime was denounced in Colombia and internationally, by Amnesty International of Asturias, by the NGO Confederation of Asturias, and by Soldepaz, among others.

Carlos Pedraza: a Life

In the days to come, many actions and events will be held to commemorate the life of Carlos Pedraza. Friends, comrades, and relatives in his neighbourhood, Molinos 2, have called for a Day of Remembrance Memory on January 16 and 17.

On January 19, the People's Congress has convened a gathering in front of the Office of the Attorney General of Colombia in order to build political momentum that could lead to progress on this case.

Source: Colombia Informa, January 2016

With sale of Isagen, Colombian energy sovereignty is ceded to Canadian company for a bargain price

On January 13, a majority share in the Colombian state-owned company ISAGEN was sold to Brookfield Asset Management, a Canadian private investment fund. Controversy has at times swirled around the hydroelectric power company, as in the case of its unilateral decision in 2014 to end talks intended to manage the negative

The sale of a 57.61% share in the company to a Toronto private fund is worrying for several reasons. The first of these is the price: the Canadian consortium bought the shares at their lowest market price. The second has to do with the dubious legality of the call for tender. Only one bid was received, suggesting that the Santos government may have made a deal with Brookfield for a rapid sale. Santos has been trying to raise revenue for his 4G Project, involving the construction of 8000 km of roads across the country, and is now announcing that the income from the sale will be invested in 4G. The goal of 4G is to facilitate "trade" in goods – i.e., the mining and export of raw materials by multinationals.

It came as no surprise that neither the Santos government nor Brookfield paid any attention to the public's concerns. It is foreseen that the privatization of ISAGEN will lead not only to higher electricity rates, but also to denial of service to people unable to afford them. That, is electricity will become a private business instead of a public service. Already, global warming and the current El Niño climate phenomenon are reducing water levels and affecting hydro production, with a concomitant rise in electricity rates.

Germán Corredor, director of the Energy Observatory of the National University of Colombia, is concerned that



impacts of Hidrosogamoso, one of the country's biggest hydroelectric power plants. Nevertheless, the sale of ISAGEN to Brookfield is far from achieving unanimous public acceptance.

the geothermal and wind energy projects undertaken by ISAGEN will be abandoned by the Canadian consortium, as multinationals are interested in profit and not the public interest.

In addition, the country's energy sovereignty is at risk. The sale means that the government will forgo 3 billion pesos (some 1.3 million Canadian dollars) each year, and will also forfeit its national expertise in electricity research and production.

Another factor is that Brookfield has, with the purchase of ISAGEN, acquired usufruct rights to thousands of hectares, allegedly so that it can make a return on its investment. It will be allowed to mine for minerals, oil, and other resources on these lands with no accountability to

the local population or the Colombian government.

In this case as in others, the Santos government has shown its willingness to kowtow to Canadian and other multinationals at the expense of ordinary Colombians. Opposition movements are now in full swing. On January 12, a large rally was held in Medellín to protest the privatisation of ISAGEN. The sale of the company is one among many motives for a general strike called by workers', indigenous, and other social and political groups and movements, to be held in the coming months. As activists, we must support the work of everyone who resists the domination of multinationals, especially those headquartered in Canada.

Source: PASC, January 2016

Canadian Multinationals in Colombia: War Profiteers

Colombia vies for 1st place as the most dangerous country in the world for union activists and 2nd place in terms of forced displacements. More than 85% of internal refugees and murdered unionists come from regions marked by mining and petroleum development. Canada, which has signed a free trade agreement with Colombia, is the primary country of origin for foreign investment in this sector, meaning that Colombia's most important petroleum and precious metals reserves are managed through Canadian capital markets. Yet Canada has no system for regulating the activities of its companies abroad, allowing them to act with complete impunity as they profit from political violence in this war-torn country.

This bulletin intends to break the silence.

We would like to thank the following unions for their financial support:



The members of **Projet Accompagnement Solidarité Colombie** are available on demand to visit workplaces and to participate in group discussions on the impacts of Canadian investments in Colombia, and the situation with unions in Colombia.

Don't hesitate to contact us.