

# The Profiteers Bulletin



Ending Canadian corporate impunity in Colombia February 2014

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## Arrests of Trade Union Leaders Continue

Bogota - December 5th, 2013- The Oil Industry Workers Union (USO) condemns the detention of its companions today.

CAMPO ELIAS ORTIZ, HECTOR SANCHEZ and JOSE DILIO NARANJO, workers and union leaders of the Department of Meta, were deprived of their freedom because of the worker protests in 2011 and 2012 in the municipal of Puerto Gaitán and who worked in businesses against multinational PACIFIC RUBIALES.

The arrest was ordered by prosecution 239 Sectional of the Individual Freedom Unit, under the serious accusations of aggravated sequestration, obstruction of pathways, threats and violation of the right to work, surely applying the dark "Citizen Security Statute" that opens the way to a new stage of prosecution the right of association and social protest.



These detainments are in addition to the arrest of DARIO CARDENAS, Vice-President of the USO Meta Section weeks ago; and the hundreds of arrests of the rural workers in the entire country that mobilized crying for their rights. The judicializing has been extended to the human rights defenders such as DAVID RAVELO and directors such as HUBER BALLESTEROS, executive member of the CUT and of Fensuagro.

The risk of new arrests has been announced to the directors of USO, another piece of evidence that the State, and especially the Fiscal General of the Nation are at the service of the Transnational Businesses in the development of the so-called "investor trust" that means the trampling of the worker rights, the right of the association and the union freedoms to guarantee the looting of natural resources and abhorrent violations of the environment.

The great paradox, of which the country and the international community should know, is that while the judicial system should be investigating PACIFIC RUBIALES and the company contractors that surround it for the serious violations against the worker rights, they do the opposite with an embarrassing attitude of subjugation to transnational capital, in contrast with the national interest.

While the authoritarian government of Santos and the Attorney Montealegre boast of favoring peace with the insurgency, they are simultaneously unleashing the fiercest persecution of the trade union movement and establishing an environment of widespread terror in the workplace.

We demand not only the immediate freedom of our detained companions, but also the cessation of the State persecution against the oil workers and against the country's social movement, the recognition of union freedoms and worker rights, the sovereignty of Colombian justice opposite transnational interests and the repeal of the "Statute of City Security" and other arbitrary rules that judicialize social mobilization and trample worker rights, establishing a civil dictatorship throughout the country.

Source:

USO Press release December 5th 2013

Translation: PASC.

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## Violence and persecution of Colombian trade unionists must end!



*2014 has started with fear and sadness in Colombia as attacks and criminalization of social protests continue. With yet another trade union leader viciously attacked, IndustriALL Global Union joins Colombian unions in denouncing the violence.*

The attacks, displacements, threats, assassinations as well as the criminalization of social protest, continues corroborating the lack of political will to guarantee the exercise of freedom of association, collective bargaining and the right to strike in Colombia.

The latest dramatic incident reported occurred on 10 January when workers of the hydroelectric Caldas - CHEC- of SINTRAELECOL-CUT, an IndustriALL Global Union affiliate, conducted a demonstration demanding the right to implement their Collective Agreement. The demonstrators also denounced the abuses committed by

the Empresas Públicas de Medellín (EPM) against the communities in Caldas.

Demonstrators were violently attacked and beaten by the Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios, using explosive devices; one of these explosives seriously injured several workers and their families. Among them, the President of CUT and SINTRAELECOL-Caldas, Arturo Oscar OROZCO, who is still in hospital in a very serious condition, suffering critical injuries to his eyes. Reports say that Arturo Orozco has lost his left eye, doctors are struggling to save his right eye and to reconstruct his face.

This is fourth attack on Oscar Orozco's life, who has suffered persecution by the security and justice agencies of the Colombian state and in particular by the Attorney General's Office. Deliberately ignoring his role as a trade union and community leader, the Attorney General's Office has attempted to convict Oscar Orozco claiming that he has staged "self- attacks."

On January 4, 2014 Luis Marin Rolong Ever, a regional leader of SINALTRACEBA brewery workers union was murdered by unknown gunmen as he was waiting for a bus in the

town of Soledad. The next day the President of SINALTRACEBA, Gamboa Rafael Maldonado, received death threats from paramilitaries while the union was holding its General Assembly.

In December 2013 IndustriALL denounced the unfair detention of four leaders of IndustriALL affiliate USO; Dario Cardenas, Hector Sanchez, Campo Elías and José Ortíz Dilio Naranjo. They are also key witnesses in an ongoing investigation against Pacific Rubiales. Edwin Brown, president of the National USO, reaffirmed that these arrests are part of a setup orchestrated by Pacific Rubiales in complicity with the Attorney General. USO leadership has called on the Vice President to urgently move the four unionists to another prison yard as they are

currently sharing the yard with members of paramilitary and Bacrim groups who are threatening their safety.

On 15 January Colombian unions will be mobilizing denounce these horrific attacks. Join our campaign to demand an end to persecution, attacks and assassination of trade unionists in Colombia!

Source: IndustriALL Global Union

*IndustriALL Global Union represents 50 million workers in 140 countries in the mining, energy and manufacturing sectors and is a new force in global solidarity taking up the fight for better working conditions and trade union rights around the world.*

*IndustriALL challenges the power of multinational companies and negotiates with them on a global level.*



## Internacional Solidarity in action

An Urgent Action was issued by USO on December 4th . In the following days, several Canadian labour unions and social organisations issued press releases denouncing the arrests and PASC delivered a letter directly to the Canadian embassy on behalf of QUISETAL, a coalition of Quebec organisations working on the social and environmental impacts of transnationals in Latin America

As a result of this pressure, the Ministry of Justice agreed to meet with the USO. At the meeting, the Minister promised to address the situation within a short delay. We are still waiting to see what concrete action will result from this promise.

You can join the PASC email list to be part of the Urgent Action Network

[www.pasc.ca](http://www.pasc.ca)

**PROJECT ACCOMPANIMENT AND SOLIDARITY WITH COLOMBIA**

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# People's tribunal on the Canadian mining industry to take place in May 2014, in Montreal

A people's tribunal on the Canadian mining industry - the first of its kind in North America - is slated to take place in late May 2014.

The tribunal, to be held in Montreal, will kick off on Thursday, May 29, with a keynote address at one of the city's universities. It will continue on May 30 and 31 with hearings at Centre culturel Georges-Vanier, where presentations will be given by witnesses and experts from Canada and several Latin American countries. The event will conclude June 1 with a day of workshops, discussion groups, and jury deliberations.

The idea of holding a people's tribunal on the

Canadian mining industry arose in the context of QUISETAL, a Quebec coalition on the social and environmental impacts of transnationals in Latin America, in which the groups PASC and JUSTE (Justice transnationales extractives) are participating. The initiative is inspired by past involvement in people's tribunals by a research team associated with Centr'ERE at the Université du Québec à Montréal (UQAM) in Chile and by members of JUSTE in Guatemala. Over a dozen trade union, university-based, and solidarity organizations are now working to prepare the tribunal.

Source: PASC

## 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.

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