

# USLEAP

Fall 2012:  
Issue #3

Fighting for worker justice in the global economy

## Mexico Seeks to Roll Back Worker Rights Protections Before TPP Negotiations

## Fair Trade Split Spotlights Worker Rights Concerns



Mexican workers rally on May Day 2012 to protest labor law changes that were being rushed through a lame duck session of the Mexican Congress in early October.

The Mexican Congress is considering a package of labor law changes that would make it even more difficult for workers to organize independent unions and would strengthen the protection contract system in Mexico that deprives workers of their basic rights. The changes would also give new rights to employers to use subcontracting and increase precarious work. The move came just before Mexico joins negotiations for the largest trade and investment deal in U.S. history.

The changes were vigorously opposed by the Mexican unions and the international trade union movement, as well as by U.S. members of congress.

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL), joined by nine other members of Congress,

wrote Secretary of State Hillary Clinton on September 21 expressing opposition to the roll backs and asking her to urge the Mexican government to respect worker rights. USLEAP and other worker rights supporters contacted key members of the Mexican Congress to urge defeat of the proposal while Mexican unions organized an encampment outside the parliamentary building.

The reforms would create additional impediments to the exercise of the right to strike, perpetuate the system of protection contracts

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The difficult relationship between Fair Trade, a system originally intended to benefit small, disadvantaged coffee producers, and the rights of plantation workers is getting more public attention due to the departure of the main U.S. group, Fair Trade USA (FTUSA, formerly, Transfair USA) from the global body Fairtrade International (FLO, formerly Fair Labelling Organizations).

While other factors, including fees structure, are said to have contributed to the split that took place late last year, the primary policy dispute is FTUSA's determination to certify coffee plantations over the objections of FLO.

An August article in *The Nation* captured the debate, with FTUSA arguing that it wants to "empower" coffee workers on plantations, as well as small producers and coops, and bring plantation coffee workers the benefits of Fair Trade. FLO, whose governance structure includes representation from coffee producer associations and cooperatives, strongly opposes redefining the original

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## 25th Anniversary: 1987-2012!

**This year marks USLEAP's 25th Anniversary. We'd like to, most importantly, thank you for supporting us (and also invite you to make a special once-in-a-quarter-century anniversary donation).**

### 25th Anniversary Events in Chicago and DC

If you live in the Washington, DC or Chicago areas, mark your December calendars. On Saturday, December 1, 2012, from 2:30 to 5:30 p.m., an informal celebration will be held in Chicago at the home of Stephen Coats (after mid-November, call 773. 262.6502 or email [scoats@usleap.org](mailto:scoats@usleap.org) for directions, information, and to confirm the date). The week of December 3, USLEAP will hold a more formal early evening reception in Washington, DC at a site to be named later. Check the web page or contact us after November 1 to confirm time and place.

### 25th Anniversary Booklet Available

Please contact the office if you would like to be mailed a hard copy of the 25th Anniversary booklet, available after October 15. We will also post it on the website. It contains a short history of the organization, recognition of past board and staff, a few short stories, messages of support from unions and worker rights groups in Latin America, North America, and Europe, and thanks to the many individuals and organizations who have been supporting our work financially. (A contribution for mailing and handling a hard copy would be accepted but is not required.)

## Welcome!

USLEAP welcomes Mia Fill as our new Development Associate. Mia previously worked as a social media intern with Amnesty International and Interfaith Worker Justice; we hope she'll spiff up our social media outreach; email her at [mfill@usleap.org](mailto:mfill@usleap.org) if you have any suggestions! She takes over from Maria Demopoulos who departed to take up a full-time job at a local Chicago-area foundation. Best wishes in your new job, Maria, and thanks for your work the past two years.

## Apologies

We had a foul-up with the Summer 2012 newsletter mailing, which didn't go out for several weeks after it was printed. We're sorry for that, and especially to anyone who did not want to be listed as a donor in our 25th Anniversary booklet but thought that s/he had missed the July 13 deadline announced in the newsletter. While we extended the deadline and were able to accommodate all the requests we received, we apologize to those of you who didn't contact us because you thought it was too late to do so.

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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# Colombia FTA in Place but not Worker Rights

While the Colombia Free Trade Agreement was implemented in mid-May 2012 following President Obama's declaration that sufficient progress had been made on worker rights, trade unions and worker rights advocates say progress remains modest at best. A Congressional monitoring group that includes both members who voted against and for the FTA also remains vigilant and concerned.

In a September 2012 statement, members of the Congressional Monitoring Group on Labor Rights in Colombia noted some progress since the two governments signed a Labor Action Plan in April 2011, citing the re-establishment of a dedicated Labor Ministry, new measures to address subcontracting abuses, and increased investigators and prosecutors for violence against trade unionists.

But the Congressional Monitoring Group also decried the continuing high levels of violence, with 34 trade unionists murdered since the signing of the Plan, and called on the Colombian government to punish both perpetrators as well as the intellectual authors of violence against trade unionists. It also called for "robust" enforcement of a new measure providing for prison terms for those who block the exercise of basic labor rights (no one has been successfully prosecuted to date) and an end to the use of "sham cooperatives" and similar tactics of indirect hiring that make it nearly impossible to organize unions and provide lower legal safeguards and benefits.

Members of Congress signing the letter were Representatives George Miller, Rosa DeLauro, Keith Ellison, Sam Farr, Hank Johnson, Sander Levin, James McGovern, and Michael Michaud.

## AFL-CIO Report Released

Earlier, the AFL-CIO released a report, *The Colombian Action Plan Related to Labor Rights:*

*The View through Workers' Eyes*, at a July 24 panel in Washington, DC where Colombian and U.S. trade unionists and NGOs spoke about recent developments on labor rights in Colombia.

The report recognized that some progress has been made but found that very little has changed in terms of respect for the basic rights of workers in Colombia while violence against trade unionists remains the highest in the world.

The report, available on the USLEAP and AFL-CIO websites, was presented by Celeste Drake, AFL-CIO trade policy specialist, who was joined by Gimena Sanchez of the Washington Office on Latin America. Colombian members of the panel were Miguel Conde of the Sintrainagro agricultural workers union, Jhonsson Torres of the sugarcane workers union Sinalcorteros, and Luciano Sanin, Executive Director of the National Labor College.

## GM Hunger Strike Secures Negotiations

Workers who were dismissed last year from a General Motors plant in Colom-

bia began a hunger strike in August after protests, including a year long encampment in front of the U.S. embassy in Bogota, failed to secure justice. Their cause garnered new attention when five workers sewed their lips together to protest the company's firing last year of sick workers who say their illness is work-related and the firings unjustified.

According to Jorge Parra of ASOTRECOL, the association of workers and ex-workers injured at the plant, General Motors "is firing us without just cause, harming us and our families. We are making this decision because our health has worsened day by day, we have lost our homes, we're basically on the street and we have been forgotten."

After GM Colombia agreed to negotiations in late August, the hunger strike was suspended but resumed again in September after the company reportedly presented a pitifully inadequate offer. At presstime, however, ASOTRECOL had again suspended the hunger strike in response to a new round of negotiations.

Witness for Peace and the Washington Office on Latin America have

*continues on page 6*



Credit: ASOTRECOL

*One of seven General Motors workers in Colombia who sewed their lips together in August in a hunger strike to demand justice after being fired in 2011 for what they say were work-related illnesses.*



# Latin American Banana Unions Target Bonita in Ecuador Once Again

After months of entreaties and generous patience, the Coordination of Latin American Banana Unions (COLSIBA) has publicly targeted the Ecuadorian banana company Bonita for once again union-busting. Bonita is the 4th largest banana company in the world; Ecuador is the world's leading banana exporter, and virtually union-free.

According to the primary group representing agricultural workers in Ecuador, FENACLE (the National Federation of Free Agro-industrial Workers, Peasant Farmers and Indigenous People of Ecuador), hundreds of workers organized a union at the company's Alamos operations in 2011. The company subsequently busted the union through dismissals, threats, and other anti-union measures. As of late 2011, few members of the union were left and FENACLE focused its demand on reinstatement of the general secretary of the union, Lester Freire.

In a February 2012 meeting in Ec-

uador with FENACLE, COLSIBA, the International Union of Foodworkers (IUF), the European Banana Action Network (EUROBAN), and USLEAP, representatives from Bonita indicated the company would be willing to consider reinstatement if official documentation confirming Lester Freire as the general secretary was provided.

The union secured the documentation proving that Freire was general secretary at the time he was fired, entitling him to legal protection, but the company then reverted to its previous position and now defends the firing as part of a move to downsize the operation in the face of economic difficulties and the need (!) to subcontract out more of its workforce. The company had the audacity to suggest that Mr. Freire should get himself hired on by one of the subcontracting firms, or establish one himself.

Bonita has successfully resisted union organizing for years, and in 2002 used armed thugs to violently evict striking

workers at the same plantations. In recent years, the company has become an active participant in the World Banana Forum, suggesting it might be embarking on a new path to respect worker rights. Apparently not. COLSIBA, FENACLE, EUROBAN, and USLEAP will be developing an international action plan in October.

## Ecuador Busts Five New Banana Unions

FENACLE in September also reported that a wave of repression has broken out against other banana unions, with over 150 workers from five newly formed unions in the Los Rios and Guayas area fired. In some cases, workers were evicted with their families by armed men. At one plantation, FENACLE reports, "workers and their families were taken by surprise when a group of heavily armed men arrived and started threatening people and

evicting them from their homes [...]. The doors of their houses were broken and their belongings thrown out, pregnant women, children - including handicapped children - and old people were all treated with complete disrespect." Workers were told to resign from the union or they would be shot.

At presstime, FENACLE was pressing the Ecuadorian government to get the workers reinstated and ensure respect for worker rights. For more information, see the website of Banana Link. ©



Credit: FENACLE

*Workers and their families were evicted from the Hacienda Nueva Colonia and four other plantations in Ecuador in September after the workers organized unions.*

## Mexico...

*continues from front page*

under which employers collude with business-friendly “unions” to block workers from organizing independent unions, weaken worker protections, and promote precarious work.

**Flash!** The House of Deputies overwhelmingly passed the package in late September but the proposal was running into unexpected obstacles in the Senate just as this newsletter went to press on October 7.

Details on the final changes were not available at presstime but the original proposal would increase the likelihood of workers being fired for forming an independent union by requiring the names of union members to be given to the local labor board which includes employers, give labor boards greater freedom to declare strikes illegal, strengthen the practice of subcontracting, give employers more freedom to fire workers and no longer require written notification of the

cause for being fired, and cap back-pay in cases of illegal termination.

A flood of letters opposing the legislation came shortly before the vote from international and national unions, including the AFL-CIO, IndustriALL, Steelworkers, the International Trade Union Confederation, FLOC, and many others.

Over the past several years, there have been several attempts to pass labor law changes in Mexico that would roll back worker rights protections. A new effort was put on a fast track by the out-going PAN government of Felipe Calderon who challenged the incoming PRI government to approve the changes in a lame duck congress held in September and October.

### Timing a Slap in the Face as Mexico Joins Trans-Pacific (TPP) Trade Negotiations

Outrageously, the action to roll back protections for worker rights came just

two weeks before Mexico is slated to officially join negotiations in mid October for the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP).

It is not clear whether Mexico, and Canada, which is also joining the TPP negotiations, would be subject to the abysmally weak labor provisions of NAFTA, which currently set U.S. and Mexico trade rules, or to a new labor clause that is being negotiated under TPP, official details of which have yet-to-be released to the public.

Unconfirmed reports indicate that the proposed TPP labor chapter would be an improvement over the labor protections included in the most recent trade agreements (Peru, Colombia, Panama and South Korea, all of which have been passed) that are subject to a May 2007 accord between the Bush Administration and Democrats.

One of the primary improvements in the May 2007 accord over NAFTA and CAFTA is that governments are not allowed to weaken existing labor law.

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## Impunity Keeps Worker Center Closed



*Credit: Maquila Solidarity Network*

*Blanca Velásquez, Executive Director of the CAT, a non-closed worker rights center in Mexico, has received multiple death threats for her work in Puebla.*

Violence and impunity continue to plague worker rights supporters in Mexico, forcing the continued closing of the offices of the Workers Support Center (CAT, Centro de Apoyo al Trabajador), the most prominent worker rights advocacy group in Puebla and long-time US-LEAP partner.

Despite the intervention of human and worker rights groups and unions in Mexico, Canada, and the U.S., the Mexican government has failed to make any credible effort to investigate and prosecute those responsible for numerous acts of violence against the CAT, the most recent of which was in May 2012 when CAT staffer José Enrique Morales Montaña was kidnaped, tortured, and threatened with death.

Shortly after his release, CAT Executive Director Blanca Velásquez, who has previously received numerous death threats, got two text mes-

sages saying she would be next and would be killed. The May violence follows years of harassment and violent threats levied against the CAT, including a December 2010 ransacking of the CAT offices that left behind death threats scrawled on one of the walls.

The Mexican human rights organization ProDESC, which has provided accompaniment and other support for the CAT, reports that while the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued protective orders for the CAT, the government has only taken partial steps to apply them, helping prompt CAT to close its offices after the May violence.

The unionized Johnson Controls factory in Puebla, at which CAT was active, also remains closed (see Summer 2012 Newsletter), a bitter loss in the effort to establish independent, democratic unions in the autoworld sector in Mexico.

## **Fair Trade...**

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Fair Trade coffee model.

Many Fair Trade activists in the U.S. have also opposed FTUSA's move, with Equal Exchange, the oldest U.S. Fair Trade coffee company, taking out a full page ad in a Vermont newspaper to (unsuccessfully) urge Green Mountain Coffee to reject the FTUSA plantation model. Meanwhile, FTUSA has moved to ramp up its labor flank, adding the United Farm Workers to its board this year as UFW and others explore the application of Fair Trade to U.S. agricultural sector.

## **Banana Plantations Certified for Years**

Lost in the coffee debate is the fact that for many years FLO, supported by FTUSA, has been certifying plantations—in flowers, tea, and, especially, bananas. The Coordination of Latin American Banana Worker Unions (COLSIBA) has over a decade of experience with Fair Trade certification of plantations and has for years been pressing Fair Trade to address serious concerns, periodically threatening a public campaign.

Concerns range from certification of non-union banana plantations and large coops with hundreds of workers where worker rights, including freedom of association, are not respected to problems with the certification of unionized plantations where the application to large employers of a model originally developed for small producers allows management to undermine unions.

## **FLO Improves Worker Policies**

Global unions, led by the International Union of Foodworkers and the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers Federation (now a part of IndustriALL, the global union for manufacturing), have worked with FLO for several years to address worker rights concerns, many of which were finally addressed in policy changes made by the FLO board in March 2012, shortly after FTUSA departed the FLO system. In August 2012, FTUSA released its own version of "farm worker" standards, but they are significantly and disappointingly much weaker than FLO's, rejecting much of the input provided by worker rights advocates and unions during a consultation process.

USLEAP will take its lead on this issue from the unions representing workers in the sectors that have Fair Trade

certification, with a particular focus on the banana sector which, unlike most Fair Trade-certified sectors, is heavily unionized. COLSIBA has so far taken a wait-and-show-me approach to the split, saying that neither FLO nor FTUSA have adequately addressed long-standing concerns about Fair Trade certification in the banana sector. COLSIBA's position, rightly, is that what really matters is not what is on paper but what happens on the ground. COLSIBA is pressing both FLO and FTUSA to address concrete cases in Costa Rica, Colombia, Peru and elsewhere.

USLEAP is working not only with COLSIBA and the IUF but also the International Labor Rights Forum, the Teamsters and others in developing and implementing a Fair Trade-worker rights strategy for FTUSA and FLO, which is now entering the U.S. market with its own label to compete directly with FTUSA.

Ironically, other certification schemes that are much weaker on worker rights both on paper and in practice tend to escape activist scrutiny; Rainforest Alliance in particular is increasingly pervasive, and has been taking "socially-responsible" market share from Fair Trade in some sectors (e.g. flowers).

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## **Colombia...**

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been spearheading efforts to support the ASOTRECOL workers; the UAW has also intervened with GM in support of the workers. Check the Witness for Peace webpage for suggested actions. Both groups have pointed to the case as an emblematic one representing inadequate progress on worker rights in Colombia.

## **Peace Negotiations Accompanied by Impunity?**

In developments with profound implications for human and worker rights, the Colombian government and the

FARC have agreed to peace negotiations that might end the continent's longest-running war. But in an apparent quid pro quo for the support of the military for the negotiations, "Colombia's Congress is moving quickly to weaken the civilian court system's ability to try and punish human rights violations committed by the country's armed forces," according to Just the Facts.

The proposed legislation "would send all but the most absolutely severe human rights cases to the military court system, which has a long history of failing to punish such crimes." If approved, as expected, crimes of torture, extrajudicial execution, rape and forced disappearance would now go to the military court system. ©

## **Electrical Workers Make Progress**

In one positive development, the Mexican electrical workers union (SME) has made some progress, winning an important court victory in August and obtaining a new accord from the government to respect an agreement signed with the union a year ago to find employment for 16,000 of the original 44,000 union workers who were terminated in 2009 (the others accepted their termination and received their severance pay).

For comprehensive reporting on labor issues in Mexico, see Mexican Labor News and Analysis, published monthly on the United Electrical Workers website at [www.ueinternational.org](http://www.ueinternational.org). ©



# Colombian Flower Workers Ask USLEAP and ILRF for Support

The Colombian House of Flower Workers (Casa de Trabajadores de las Flores) and CUT regional office in Cauca contacted USLEAP and the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) in early September on behalf of workers at the Colombian operations of Miami-based Falcon Farms. In February, the National Flower Workers Organization filed a petition of union demands on behalf of 86 workers at Falcon Farms who have since been subject to firings and other punishment, and are now owed legally-required severance, back-pay, social security and other benefits. The workers have also expressed concern for their safety.

USLEAP wrote the Colombian Labor Minister on September 10 and sent a September 14 letter to Falcon Farms

President Jairo Rengifo while ILRF generated thousands of grassroots e-letters to the Colombian government and the company. House of Flower Workers coordinator Betty Fuentes, a long-time flower worker organizer, reported that local Labor Ministry officials had visited the farms but at presstime there was no progress on resolving the issues.

Thousands of flower workers in Colombia have lost their jobs in the past two years, most of whom are also owed back wages, severance and other benefits. The flower sector is one of several given special attention in the Colombian Labor Action Plan but flower worker unions and supporters say respect for basic rights has not improved in the past year.



complaint, rejecting an early request from the Honduran government to delay the process. The Honduran complaint (available on the USLEAP website) demonstrates some political lessons learned from the filing of the first labor complaint on Guatemala. The Honduran complaint is much more extensive in order to demonstrate a pattern of failure to enforce labor law and it focuses on export industries to better meet the criteria that violations occur in a manner impacting trade and investment. It also includes issues of violence and impunity, implicitly rejecting the Administration's position that these issues are not subject to the CAFTA labor complaint process.

Meanwhile, violence against human rights defenders in Honduras remains unabated, with journalists, campesino leaders, and LGBT activists being murdered at an alarming rate; U.S. policy on human rights violations in Honduras seems to finally be tightening, partly in response to congressional pressure.

## Peru Labor Law Reform Fades

Changes over the summer in the administration of President Ollanta Humala, including the departure of a trade union leader, have stymied hopes for labor law reform, extending the failure of the Peruvian government to honor commitments to address labor law deficiencies that were made at the time the U.S. Congress was voting on the Peru FTA. As reported in the previous USLEAP newsletter, Peru lacks a general labor code while hundreds of thousands of workers in the maquila and agro-industries are governed by separate regulations that effectively promote temporary contracts, block union formation, and provide lower benefits and wages.

The prevalence of legalized subcontracting in the maquila/apparel sector is so wide spread that it prompted leading apparel brands to agree to participate in a conference earlier this year that examined the effect of short-term employment contracts on working conditions in the country's garment and textile industry.



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## Mexico...

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See USLEAP's Spring 2012 newsletter (available on the USLEAP website) for an explanation of the differences, and improvements, of labor protections from NAFTA (1.0) to CAFTA (2.0) to the May 2007 FTAs (3.0).

## TPP Negotiations Move Forward

Negotiations for the TPP continue to move forward, but not without fits and starts. Opposition continues to build at home and abroad against what Public Citizen calls "NAFTA on steroids." The Citizens Trade Campaign is leading grassroots opposition in U.S. to the proposal and, along with Global Trade Watch, has extensive background materials.

Other countries that are part of the negotiations are Australia, Brunei, Chile, Malaysia, New Zealand, Peru, Singapore, Vietnam, and now Mexico and Canada. In some countries, public opposition has been vigorous.

Negotiations are not expected to conclude until sometime in 2013 after which each government's legislature, including the U.S. Congress, will vote.



## Violence...

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sticking points remain, as they have for over a year, the refusal of the Guatemalan government to restore sanction authority to the Ministry of Labor after it was taken away by a constitutional court several years ago and the failure to establish a fund for maquila workers to ensure that they are paid what they are legally due when maquila plants close. A leaked "labor action plan" also shows that none of the points formally under discussion address the critical issues of violence and impunity.

## Honduran Complaint on a Different Pace

The Administration is moving more swiftly on a CAFTA labor complaint against Honduras, filed in March 2012 by the AFL-CIO and over two dozen Honduran trade unions. The Honduran government reportedly is also being more responsive, although details are not available at presstime.

The U.S. Labor Department made clear from the beginning that it did not intend the Honduran complaint to get bogged down like the Guatemala

# Violence Against Guatemalan Banana Union at Bay; Impunity Still Reigns

The Guatemalan banana union SITRABI has not experienced any murders since February 2012, following a year in which a half-dozen of its members were killed. On the other hand, there has been no progress in investigating or prosecuting those responsible for the 2011 murders or others, including the 2007 murder of SITRABI union leader Marco Tulio Ramirez, brother of general secretary Noe Ramirez, and murders of other Guatemalan unionists continue.

The lack of progress on the SITRABI cases comes despite a remarkable letter issued in May by the ultraconservative agribusiness sector in Guatemala urging its government to prosecute those responsible, arguing that doing so would have a beneficial political impact on a pending CAFTA labor complaint. Organizers of the letter have been more effective in another area, helping restore security protection for Noe Ramirez in May, following interventions by USLEAP and others.

USLEAP, working with the International Labor Rights Forum, has been pushing the Administration to make violence against trade unionists and impunity a higher priority in its discussions with the Guatemalan government, especially given that the U.S. government is already pressing Guatemala on labor issues because of the long-pending CAFTA labor complaint.

While the Obama Administration has made clear that it does not consider violence against trade unionists and impunity to be a violation of worker rights under CAFTA subject to its dispute mechanism, the Administration continues to say it is very concerned about violence and impunity.

Nevertheless, there are no signs that the Administration is pushing for any concrete steps, including supporting two primary demands of the Guatemalan trade unions put forth this summer: (1) increased resources for the executive and judicial branches for investigation, prosecution, and conviction of those



Credit: NISQUA

*This artwork hangs inside the offices of the banana union SITRABI, Guatemala's largest private sector union, in Morales; seven members of SITRABI have been murdered since early 2011; no one has been put behind bars.*

responsible for the violence; and (2) transferring high profile murder cases to the UN-backed International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (CICIG) for prosecution.

The U.S. government's lack of engagement so far on specific steps to address violence and impunity in Guatemala stands in stark contrast to its engagement on these issues in Colombia over the past few years, helping push the Colombian government to significantly expand resources at the judicial level (creating three special courts and assigning judges dedicated solely to violence against trade unionists) and at the executive level (in the last year alone, assigning a hundred more investigators and hiring thirty-four new prosecutors).

While USLEAP believes that the most relevant measure of progress against impunity are convictions and imprisonment of those responsible and that the bigger issue is lack of political will rather than resources, it is undeniable that resources must be adequate to the task. Guatemala is the second deadliest country in the world for trade unionists yet its special prosecutor's office for

violence against trade unionists is staffed by only one attorney and two assistants.

## CAFTA Labor Complaint Drags On

Meanwhile, progress has been slow on other worker rights issues that have stymied a resolution of the CAFTA labor complaint filed in April 2008 by the AFL-CIO and six leading Guatemalan trade unions, including SITRABI.

While the Obama Administration announced in summer 2011 that it was effectively giving up on negotiations and would take Guatemala to arbitration, this has not yet happened, in part because elections of a new government last year bought Guatemala more time. The Administration has reportedly been pursuing a two-track process, i.e. continuing direct negotiations while moving forward on arbitration, but it is a process that has moved at a snail's pace.

While negotiations are conducted in secret and public details sparse, press reports indicate that the two main

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