

Labor Situations Received in 2014

Vice President of the Sinaltrainal union survives assassination attempt

Jose Onofre Esquivel Luna, an employee of Nestle and SINALTRAINAL union leader, survived an assassination attempt at 7 p.m. on June 16 in Medellin. Onofre's bodyguard returned fire at the assassin, killing one and leaving the other injured, whom the authorities later arrested. Unions and civil society organizations from throughout Colombia and the region have called for a full investigation to clarify the actors behind this attack and ensure the long-term protection of Colombia's labor movement.

Grenade thrown at entrance to SINTRAELECOL union headquarters in Caldas

On June 18, 2014, a grenade was thrown at the SINTRAELECOL office; authorities confirmed that the pin was left in, and thus did not explode. This attempted attack comes after past spurious legal attacks were launched against the President of the union and similar attempted bombings have occurred previously. The handling of evidence in this case and past cases has been questioned, and the attacks have gone largely uninvestigated.

Chemical Attack Against CUT Unionist in Cali

On June 26, Alvaro Jose Vega, member of the Executive Committee of the CUT suffered a chemical attack in the city of Cali. On Calle 15 with 34 unknown men threw a chemical on Mr. Vega that resulted in burns and his hospitalization.

CUT union leader in Buenaventura receives threat

Ana Cristina Bermudez, a labor leader with the CUT union federation in the city of Buenaventura in Valle del Cauca received death threats for her work in June. The National Afro-Colombian Authority (ANAFRO) strongly encourages Vice Minister of the Interior, Natalia Gutierrez, to take action on this case and ensure protection of Ms. Bermudez in her labor and human rights work.

Labor Organizers Receive Paramilitary Threats in Cali

On September 2, unions in Valle del Cauca received a death threat from the paramilitary group Los Rastrojos. In this threat, the recipients are declared military objectives warned that they must cease their activities within four days or suffer consequences. Among those listed are the CUT union federation whose former Cali Representative Alvaro Vega suffered an assassination attempt early this year; SINTRAIME, which recently undertook a strike against U.S.-based coal giant Drummond; SINTRAEMCALI President Jorge Ivan Velez, whose union suffered two attacks including explosives and a fire-bomb this past

spring; and other labor organizations from the surrounding region. Previously on July 6, Geovanny Serrano, Press Director and Angel Tovar, Communications Secretary, of SINTRAEMCALI received a threat stating “...death to those delegates of sintraemcali who supported Santos. The order of my general qui.ones proposes a coup d'etat by cleansing the sintraemcali...” This threat includes SINTRAEMCALI's President Jorge Ivan Velez, Senator Alexander Lopez Maya and the SINTRAEMCALI workers who were reintegrated.

On September 22, prominent Colombian human rights defenders received a death threat from the Rastrojos paramilitary successor group, who left pamphlet at the offices of the Redepaz human rights NGO offices. The document identified the analysts listed as Leon “military objectives.” Among the targets is Julio Roberto Gomez, the director of the CGT labor federation

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Several death threats sent to Oil Workers' Union (USO) members

On January 27, 2015 Colombia's Oil Workers' Union (USO) stated that, since the beginning of year 2015, the number of threats sent to union workers seems to have increased nation-wide. This is indicated by the great number of threats and attempted attacks towards union members that have occurred solely during the month of January. From January 9 until January 27, 8 different USO members received death threats and 2 of them have survived murder attempts. The threats are usually believed by phone and text messaging, while both murder attempts were carried out with arm fire. Despite the simultaneous actions and the similar characteristics, which leads the USO to believe these cases have been coordinated, the police has failed to respond accordingly. The USO concludes its statement assuring that the human rights violations continue to grow worse in Colombia, and that the claims the organization has made in the past must be heard in order to establish security for the Colombian population.

SENA still refuses to respect basic labor rights

On January 28, 2015 members of the SINDESENA Junta Nacional denoted SENA's reluctance to accept and promote basic labor rights despite the efforts that have been made by the union. SINDESENA representatives state that due to the corruption and political ties between the SENA and certain labor unions, some organizations receive better treatment and have higher standards than others. This has caused the inferior delivery of labor rights for members of SINDESENA Junta Nacional. Some of these entail the ability of workers to request information regarding their jobs, having spaces to congregate, and access to social security for all of the members. SINDESENA asks the director of the SENA to reevaluate their practices and put the rights and needs of laborers first.

Port Union signals CARGOBÁN's continuing exploitation of workers

On February 1, 2015, Colombia's Port Union indicated CARGOBÁN's refusal to negotiate potential corporate rules needed to ensure the safety and well-treatment of workers. Though the Port Union has attempted to settle an agreement with the corporation that would give workers basic labor rights (such as 48 hour workweeks, stable job contracts, and a minimum wage) these efforts have failed because of CARGOBÁN's lack of cooperation. With port workers not being able to live a comfortable and secure life due to the demands of the job, the Port Union would like to find a medium of mediation to convince CARGOBÁN of enforcing civilized labor practices, or set up a date for a strike, in hopes of guaranteeing minimum labor rights for CARGOBÁN's personnel.

The Gaitanistas Urabeños Circulate Death Threat Pamphlet to ASOGRAS Members

On June 5, 2015, Cesar Augusto Tamayo, President of the Asociación Campesina de Santander (ASOGRAS), received a death threat in the form of a pamphlet by the paramilitary group Los Gaitanistas Urabeños. The pamphlet declared Cesar Augusto Tamayo as well as Victor Manuel Garcia Carvajalino, Regional Secretary of ASOGRAS, as military objectives. The death threat gave both Mr. Tamayo and Mr. Garcia Carvajalino 48 hours to leave their municipality. Both leaders of ASOGRAS have been denouncing the links between paramilitaries in the region and local officials as well as illicit enrichment by the mayor of Sabana de Torres, Santander.

This incident follows the assassination of local leaders Hermes Antonio Santiago Lopez on March 28 and Juvenal Doria Anaya on April 10, as well as grave injuries suffered by Alexander Jimenez Santana after an assassination that same day.

Members of the Afro-Colombian Labor Council Receive Racist Death Threat

On June 25, 2015, Agripina Hurtado and Harold Viafara of the Afro-Colombian Labor Council (CLAF) received a new death threat. The death threat stated "Get out of here black men and women, trade unionists belonging to EMCALI. Agripina Hurtado and Harold Viafara, we are going to massacre you. Down with the blacks, with the CLAF, and USE. Get out of here or we will disappear you." This threat is one of many that CLAF has received over the past seven years, and that continues to target trade unionists and members of the Afro-Colombian community.

Despite Labor Talks with Meta Petroleum Corp, USO Union Members Threatened

On June 30, 2015, a negotiation committee was formed to discuss a list of demands presented by USO on June 16. Despite delay tactics by the Meta Petroleum Corp, a subsidiary of Pacific Rubiales Energy, labor discussions between the union and Meta Petroleum Corp will resume on August 10. According to USO, in the meantime the Meta Petroleum Corp has pressured, extorted and even threaten workers who chose to join USO, in efforts to persuade new members to disaffiliate and isolate them from benefits such as technical training programs, contract renewals or employment when Ecopetrol assumes operations in the Piriri and Rubiales oil fields in June, 2016.

Santiago de Cali University Professor's Union (SIPRUSACA) Faces Harassment

On July 10, 2015, SIPRUSACA (the Professor's union at the Santiago de Cali University) members, José Omar Salazar C. and Hernando Giraldo Duque who are university directors denounced violations to their right to freedom of association. Recently, the university has fired approximately 80 professors due to their union participation and the paramilitary organization Rastrojos circulated a threatening pamphlet targeting SIPRUSACA.

USTRIAL and SINALTRAINAL Members Continue to be Denied their Job Entrance

On July 10, 2015, according to USTRIAL (food industry union) and SINALTRAINAL (agribusiness sector union), Diego Ramiro Canelo Velasco, manager of Seatech International, and Hernan Tadeo Velez Pareja, manager A Tiempo continue to refuse entrance of union members despite being formally charged with violating human rights, persecution of trade unionists, and firing affiliated sick workers. The abuses took place during the mass firing of 120 union workers beginning in 2010. Most workers fired were mothers' heads of households with health issues obtained due to their working environment.

Unions in Cali are Victims of Riot Police/ESMAD Excessive Force

On July 15, 2015 SINTRAEMCALI, SINTRAUNICOL, SINTRAHOSPICLINICAS, SINDESENA and COES all were attacked by riot police. According to SINTRAEMCALI, riot police fired tear gas at union leaders as they protested public policies of the municipal, departmental and the national government that went against the wellbeing of public service workers.

UNP Weakens President of ASOTREDP's Security Measures

On September 17, 2015, Anibal Perez Parra, President of the Association of Injured Drummond Workers (ASOTREDP) reported that the National Protection Unit (UNIP) has downgraded his security measures to only one bodyguard. This decision has caused extreme distress for Mr. Parra given the constant death threats he receives for his work.

The UNP did not provide Mr. Parra with any concrete information on the reasons why this decision was taken.

Threats against Prosegur Union Leader Continue

On September 18, 2015, the National Union School (ENS) reported that Ovidio Quiroz, union leader for Sintravalore who works for Prosegur is facing death threats. Mr. Quiroz's wife received an anonymous phone call where the caller threatened that her husband would one day come home "cut in little pieces". This is not the first time that Mr. Quiroz has received death threats. In 2012, his boss called him a "terrorist" making him fear for his life. On other occasions, Mr. Quiroz has been followed, and there was one occasion when his son was photographed by a stranger while he was playing soccer.

UNI Global Union, a global union federation based in Switzerland, condemned these threats and brought them to the attention of Christian Gut and Helena Revoredo, CEO and President of Prosegur in their Spain headquarters. UNI Global Union is urging Prosegur to take action to change anti-union policies in its subsidiary in Colombia. As of yet, the company has not condemned violence and threats against trade union leaders like Mr. Quiroz. Various union leaders and members of Prosegur have suffered accusations, prosecutions, surveillance and death threats.

Police Officer Suspended for Speaking Out Against Labor Abuses

The union for legal workers in Colombia and related industries (Judicial Asonal S.I-Cali) has demanded the reinstatement of the police officer Ruben Dario Rozo. Mr. Rozo worked for the Police Department for over 20 years, and recently spoke against the lavish benefits that the officers in higher ranks receive, and the large wage gap between those in the upper ranks and the majority of police officers. After these statements were publicly released, Mr. Rozo was suspended from his position and his home was raided. The union demands that Mr. Rozo be reinstated to his position, and that no future action be taken against him or his family.

Labor Violations by McKesson Corporation

On October 1, 2015, Felix Joaquin Valencia sent a letter to U.S. Ambassador to Colombia, Kevin Whitaker and Labor Attaché, Brenna Dougan, informing of labor violations of McKesson Corporation. According to Mr. Valencia, there is substantial evidence of contract and labor violations by the corporation. Under the U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan, these types of violations must be closely observed and action taken in order to respect the bilateral agreements.

Plot to Kill Directives of Buenaventura's Traffic Control Union ASAGETRA

On October 2, 2015, at a meeting in Cali between labor rights activists and a visiting delegation from the U.S. led by Representative Hank Johnson and organized by the Coalition of Black Trade Unionists (CBTU), ASAGETRAN (Association of Traffic Agents of Buenaventura Union) reported that there exists a plot to assassinate three of their members. On September 29, a source informed ASAGETRAN that an order was given to illegal armed actors to kill Alvaro Henrique Hurtado (President), Harrison Suarez (Vice President) and Henry Hercilio Tobar (Secretary-General). This information was made known during a general assembly meeting convened after negotiations were begun to discuss labor rights concerns including the lack of payment of salaries, lack of permanent contracts and social security benefits.

ASOGRAS Leader Target of New Death Threat (Santander)

On October 13, 2015, the Campesino Organization of Santander (ASOGRAS) received a new death threat from the Magdalena Media bloc of the Urabenos Gaitanistas paramilitaries. In this, human rights defender Cesar Tamayo, Departmental President of Asogras and subcommissioner with the Cumbre Agraria, is told he will be assassinated by paramilitaries. ASOGRAS believes he is being targeted for denouncing abuses in the area.

SINTRABIOFILM in Solidarity with the National Union of Rama and Transport Industry Services

On October 13, 2015, the Union Workers of Biofilm (SINTRABIOFILM) expressed their solidarity with the National Union of Rama and Transport Industry Services, and their continuous fight for just labor rights. In a public letter, SINTRABIOFILM states that labor rights are human rights. Also that extortion, torture, threats, unjust firings, and other labor abuses committed by companies are human rights violations. They also condemn the Regional Port Society of Barranquilla, Rio Grande and OSI Trademark for their poor labor practices.

CIAMSA Lacks Will to Meet Demands of Port Workers in Buenaventura

According to the Port Workers Union and International Dockworkers Council (IDC), October 19, 2015, is the date that negotiations will end with the CIAMSA Company. As of yet, the company is not taking this matter seriously. On August 14, 36 workers out of the 350 employees who directly work for CIAMSA presented a list of demands. This includes: 1) Complimentary meals halfway through each shift with 30 minutes to eat (this company is the only port operator that does not provide meals to its workers or enough time to consume these meals); 2) An end to racial discrimination in the workplace. The practice is for lighter skinned persons to be promoted to higher paying positions and to have darker persons train them; 3) direct hiring by CIAMSA of over 200 workers who have been

lending their services to CIAMSA through different subcontractors that have been avoiding paying workers' social security and benefits for many years; 4) Appointing the correct number of personnel required for the jobs required. The company is operating with only 2/3 of the necessary workforce. As a result, these workers are denied their rights to scheduled and compensated breaks and they can work nine consecutive night shifts and others.

Conversations with the CIAMSA began on September 9. Yet the Port Workers Union notes that CIAMSA's negotiator, Mr. Gerardo Porras, "has dedicated himself to intimidating and offering loans to workers to encourage their disaffiliation (of workers) from the union." Rather than negotiate with the workers and after being pressured to do so, the company decided to put forth a proposal before the Ministry of Labor in Buenaventura, Cali, and Bogotá. Mr. Porras held a meeting with negotiators and some affiliates where some workers dared to speak against him. As a result, he fired Eleazar González Boucha and Ricardo Hurtado Ospina. The port sector is a priority sector for the U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan (LAP). U.S. and Colombian authorities tasked with monitoring and implementation of the LAP must act immediately to guarantee that these workers' demands are met by CIAMSA and that the fired workers are reintegrated to their jobs immediately.

Seatech Continues Unfair Labor Practices for USTRIAL Workers

According to the Trade Union for Workers in the Food Industry (USTRIAL), Seatech International's (a tuna producing company) subcontractors are systematically firing union workers and workers who attempted to organize. USTRIAL brought charges against the company's directors, and a persecution hearing was supposed to occur on May 29. However, the persecutor was changed, and the day of the hearing neither the persecutor nor the executive directors appeared for trial. USTRIAL asks for direct intervention in order for this trial to take place to achieve reparations for the victims.

Threatened Union Leader Loses Protection Scheme from National Protection Unit (UNP)

Angel Tovar, a member of SINTRAEMCALI and target of constant harassment, attacks and intimidation due to his union work, lost his protection measures by the UNP on November 12. Due to continuous threats, harassment and attacks on members of SINTRAEMCALI, the Colombian government must provide strong protection measure not only for his life but also members of the union. Two bodyguards assigned by the UNP, an armored car and protection by the national Police vehicle should be made available throughout the national territory. These measures must be implemented urgently.

Central Tumaco S.A. Fires Workers

On November 20, 2015, the Ministry of Labor upheld Central Tumaco S.A.'s request to dismiss 175 workers due to the liquidation of the company. The Ministry of Labor had originally ruled to stop the dismissal. Due to the company's actions it changed its mind. Given this decision, the

Ministry of Labor must coordinate with other governmental agencies to help find alternative employment or compensation for these workers.

Union Leaders in Cali, Valle del Cauca Targeted by Death Threats

On December 10, 2015, members of the Central Workers Unit of Colombia (CUT), the country's largest union federation, and other union leaders in Cali were targeted by a death threat delivered via text message. The President of CUT- Valle del Cauca, Wilson Sáenz, CUT's treasurer in Valle del Cauca, Julian Lozano, SINTRAUNICOL's attorney in Cali, Jose Milciades Sánchez, and the president of the street vendors union, Yimy Nuñez were all listed in this threat that accused them of being guerillas of the FARC but also called for their death.

According to the Movement of Victims of State Crimes (MOVICE), a letter was delivered on December 17 to the CUT's office in Cali. The letter is an obituary for the unionists listed in the text death threat and includes two long-range bullets. The United Nations Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia [expressed](#) concern about this situation and called for a full investigation saying that "there will not be real guarantees for the work of human rights defenders in Colombia while there is no noticeable reduction in the very high rates of impunity in attacks."

Death Threats Target Union Leaders in Cartagena, Bolivar

On December 21, 2015, Humberto Diaz Ruiz, President and legal representative of Cartagena's chapter of SUTIMAC, a union for workers of construction materials, received a death threat on his cell phone. The unknown sender warned Mr. Ruiz that he was being tracked and that he would be attacked should he continue to make statements. Minutes later, the initial message was followed by a text message stating "*you have been warned fu** guerilla.*"

Similarly, Rafael Cabarcas Cabarcas, member and consultant of the Union Sindical Obreira (USO) in Cartagena received several calls and text messages stating that "his time had come." These death threats come after the recent murder in Cartagena of SUTIMAC's treasurer Robert Venecia Vega.

Arbitrary Firings of Union Members in Medellin

On December 28, 2015, two members of the SINTRAINDULECHE and SINTRAIMAGRA, unions representing workers of the multinationals Parmalat Colombia Ltda., and the French group Lactalis, were arbitrarily fired. Both workers worked at the multinationals for more than 20 years, and their dismissal comes in the wake of recent decision to stop direct contracting and use sub-contracting for the work force.

Labor Situations Received in 2016

CIAMSA Port Company Continues to Disregard Labor Rights

In a January 16 letter to the Minister of Interior and CIAMSA's human resources manager, the Port Labor Union of Colombia raised concerns over recent firings that violated employees' due process. According to the union, CIAMSA has consistently requested informal meetings with union-affiliated employees requiring them to sign release forms so they can be fired at any moment's notice, and has called employees on their personal cellphones requesting a meeting to fire that employee without justification. On several occasions, WOLA has sent letters to CIAMSA encouraging that the company respect labor rights in accordance with the U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan. We have not received any responses to these letters.

Unionized University Professors Receive Death Threats (Valle del Cauca)

On February 10, trade unions, social, and human rights organizations denounced death threats received by several unionized professors in the University of Valle del Cauca. According to rights groups, the death threats target Luis Eduardo Malagon, president of the Trade Union for Workers and Employed Professors (ARSUV), Hector Fernando Rueda, Jose Reinaldo Sabogal, Carlos Gonzalez Arbey Quintero, Cupertino Fajardo Huatado, Roberto Lucien Larmart, and Hector Carmona Fabio Cobo. These are all professors engaged in advocating for the university to end the practice of sub-contracting. The ARSUV platform was created in 2015 to serve as a group that advocates for labor rights in the university.

Threats and Murders Increase in Sabana de Torres (Santander)

On March 10, the Agrarian Association of Santander (ASOGRAS) denounced death threats and murders committed by the paramilitaries in the municipality of Sabana de Torres, Santander. In the first two weeks of March, four people were murdered, including two adolescents. According to local leaders, only three selective murders were committed in 2015. The municipality is now on high security alert due to threats circulated on March 6

that warn of “social cleansing” by a group named “Black Hand.” According to ASOGRAS, similar threats were circulated in December 2014 when 22 social, political, and victims’ rights leaders were targeted.

SINTRABIOFILM Union Continues to Await Resolution of Labor Dispute

On March 22, SINTRABIOFILM, the workers union of BIOFILM S.A, requested the Minister of Labor to intervene in the resolution of a labor dispute that has lasted more than four years. According to the union, a labor hearing has already been set, but the company refuses to move forward with the process. In the last four years, SINTRABIOFILM has reported poor working conditions and anti-union actions by BIOFILM S.A. that ultimately led to a legal action by the labor union.

Port Workers Union Denounce Lack of Work Formalization (Buenaventura)

On March 23, the Port Workers Union of Colombia denounced high levels of work informality and sub-contracting that workers continue to face in Buenaventura. According to the Port Labor Union, despite negotiations with the largest port companies in the city, such as CIAMSA, Zelsa, and Tecsa, workers continue to face labor instability, lack of pay of minimum wage, and any work contracts. The Port Labor Union also reports that some of the largest port operators continue to utilize third party companies to avoid meeting labor code requirements.

Due to this, the union has requested the Ombudsman’s office to accompany them in the development of a common agenda that includes demands for increase of labor inspectors, severance pay and pay of minimum wage, and accompaniment in work discrimination cases and in legal processes in the ports of Buenaventura, Santa Marta, Cartagena and Turbo.

SINTRAPORTECSA at Risk of Disappearing Due to Company Merger (Valle del Cauca)

Following the announcement of the merger of the Tecsa Port Company and the Buenaventura Port last year, SINTRAPORTECSA, one of the unions representing workers in the container terminal in Buenaventura’s port, has consistently reported that the merger will lead to the union’s disappearance. SINTRAPORTECSA is involved in a labor dispute with Tecsa Port Company that, despite years of negotiations, has not led to any concrete results. According to SINTRAPORTECSA, Tecsa Port Company has disregarded labor codes and rulings by the Labor Ministry, continues to refuse to sit-down dialogue with union members and to date has cancelled more than 30 union member contracts.

Decree 583 a Setback for Labor Law in Colombia

On April 8, the National Union School (ENS) published an analysis explaining the setback Decree 583 represents to Labor law in Colombia. According to ENS, the decree signed by Minister of Labor Luis Eduardo Garzón legalizes labor outsourcing in all scenarios, including those that were protected by labor legislation. It allows companies decline direct responsibility of the employment and creates an easier environment for subcontracting. This type of decree goes against all agreements in the U.S.-Colombia Labor Action Plan that promised to end this type of activity.

ASOTREDEIME Union Holds Protest against Labor Violations (Huila)

On April 21, ASOTREDEIME, union representing injured workers in the mining and energy sector, went on strike and members chained themselves to the doors of the Justice Ministry in Huila, given consistent labor violations. According to labor union leaders, workers in this sector consistently face work related injuries, lack access to proper health care, are fired from employment due to work related injuries, and do not receive a pension or social benefits. The union is demanding that the Labor Ministry intervene in these constant problems.

Member of ASIEVA Attacked (Valle del Cauca)

On April 22, the Educators Trade Union Association of Valle del Cauca (ASIEVA) denounced an attack on its secretary of peace and human rights, Flor Patricia Silva. According to ASIEVA, Ms. Silva was in her residence when armed men rushed into her home, intimidated her and finally inspected her home without taking anything. The men left the residence in a grey SUV that was waiting for them outside.

Students Arrested during International Workers Day

A coalition of unions denounced the arbitrary arrest of five students during the International Workers Day march on May 1 in Medellin. 25,000 people peacefully participated in this march. Men in civilian clothes, who later identified themselves as police, detained the students and accused them of passing out pamphlets and spray-painting threatening messages. Despite the lack of evidence for such charges, these students remain in police custody.

Seatech International Tries to Fire Sick Workers

On May 3, the National Union for Food and Agriculture (SINTRAINAL) criticized the request made by Seatech International Company to the Labor Ministry where it asks for permission to fire over 60 sick workers. According to SINTRAINAL, these workers suffer from occupational illnesses and were hired through the subcontracting company Atiempo

Servicios SAS. The National Labor School (ENS) has pointed out that Seatech is one of the companies responsible for carrying out a large number of labor violations in Colombia.

Assassination Attempt against Union Members and Patriotic Union (UP) Leader

On May 6, the Union of Industry Workers of Cartagena's Building Materials (SUTIMAC) and political leader Imelda Daza were attacked in an assassination attempt. Three men entered SUTIMAC's headquarters at 7:00 p.m. and began to shoot at the 20 people in the building. Although a bullet hit a bodyguard who tried to protect the union leaders, no one else was seriously injured. Ms. Daza had recently returned to Colombia from Sweden, where she was exiled for over 20 years. At the time of the attack, she was leading a workshop with union leaders.

ASOTREDP Condemns Repeated Labor Violations by Drummond Ltd Company (Magdalena)

On May 6, ASOTREDP, union representing injured workers in the Drummond mining company, wrote to WOLA condemning repeated labor violations. ASOTREDP underscored that since 1990, Drummond has repeatedly disobeyed labor laws in Colombia by dismissing injured workers, not providing proper health care to work related injuries, transferring injured workers to dangerous locations, and ignoring the Labor Ministry's recommendations. According to ASOTREDP, 25 work related fatalities have occurred, as well as 3,500 work related injuries.

SINALTRAINAL Union Condemns Repeated Aggression against its Members

On May 16, SINALTRAINAL union, which represents workers in the food and beverage industry, circulated a petition calling for President Santos to take further steps in guaranteeing the safety of its members. According to the union, during its 34-year long history, 25 union members have been murdered, and 2 have been forcibly disappeared. In recent months, there has been an increase in violence and over the past year more than 20 members were threatened or assaulted.

Workers from the COMPASS Group Company on Strike after Continued Labor Violations (Cesar)

On May 17, workers from the COMPASS Group went on strike demanding compliance with health and safety requirements at work, freedom of assembly, and a halt to what they consider arbitrary dismissals. According to a statement, the workers met with Colombia's Labor Minister on May 20, but have yet to find a solution to labor disputes. In the meantime, workers will remain on strike in the company's facilities.

SINTRALLOREDA Union Alerts of “Economic Panic” by Company to Justify Work Dismissals

On May 26, the SINTRALLOREDA union, which represents workers in the grease and oil production company Lloreda S.A. in Colombia, reported an “economic panic” created by the company’s management to justify ending contracts or dismissing workers. Despite claims by Lloreda S.A. of economic losses, SINTRALLOREDA claims the company has full economic capacity to continue respecting employee contracts and maintaining employment of its workers.

Floricultural Employees Are Intimidated for Joining a Union (Cundinamarca)

On June 7, the National Organization of Colombian Floricultural Workers and Employees (ONOF) reported that workers at the Floricultural company MERCEDES S.A. were intimidated and harassed by middle-management for having organized in a union. This includes the recent firing of two workers without due process or the completion of their contracts.

Colombia Ranks as One of the Worst Workers’ Rights Violators Globally

On June 13, the National Labor School (ENS) issued a report highlighting the findings of the International Trade Union Confederation’s annual report, which placed Colombia in the lowest tier (out of five) of nations regarding the status of workers’ rights. Colombia received the ranking for systematically ignoring workers’ demands, and for inadequately protecting labor organizers.

Workers’ Union Protests Labor Organizer’s Persecution by the State (Caldas)

On June 14, the SINTRAELECOL union, which represents workers in the energy industry, published a bulletin announcing the start of a trial against its regional president in the Caldas department, Oscar Arturo Orozco Sánchez. Mr. Sánchez, the victim of three assassination attempts in 2012, 2013, and 2014, had charges levied against him by the state after surviving the first attempt on his life, with the union alleging that this was done unfairly and in order to discredit him and discourage his labor organizing.

Childcare Worker Labor Organizer Killed as She Rode in a Rickshaw (Atlántico)

On June 15, Nayibe De La Hoz, who worked as a childcare worker in the *madres comunitarias* program (a government funded childcare program) was gunned down as she rode in a bicycle taxi in the southeast part of Barranquilla by an assassin on a motorcycle.

The police apprehended the hitman, as well as his partner driving the motorcycle. Ms. De La Hoz was taken to the General Hospital of Baranquilla, where she succumbed to her injuries. This killing takes place after the *madres comunitarias*' national union raised national visibility of their labor rights abuses.

Workers' Organization Decries Labor Violations by American Multinational (Magdalena)

On June 17, ASOTREDP, an organization representing injured port and mine workers in Santa Marta, sent out a memorandum condemning the multiple labor violations of the American corporation Drummond Ltd. Workers state that they been subjected to unfair working conditions, have not had their contracts honored, have been placed in danger by being relocated to unsafe areas of the country, and have not received compensation for work-related injuries. The organization urges President Juan Manuel Santos and Labor Minister Clara Rojas to intervene on their behalf.

Former Health Workers Repeatedly Exposed to DDT (Antioquia)

In the department of Antioquia, 12 workers that were employed by the ministry of health between the years of 1960-1994 were constantly exposed to the dangerous pesticide DDT, not receiving any protective gear when they were spraying for malaria, and were told to drink DDT in order to convince community members of its supposed 'harmlessness.' Now, these workers are experiencing increasingly serious health problems, often making them unable to work and depriving their family of their only income. As of present, they have received no compensation from the state.

Assassination Attempt Against Union Leader and Political Organizer (Bolívar)

On July 1, Wilson Castro Padilla, a member of SINALTRAINAL union and an activist in the Socialist Worker's Party, was the victim of an attempt on his life by two hitmen who attacked him as he left his daughter's home. Mr. Castro Padilla has been the recipient of death threats for the past 14 years, and by order of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, has needed to be protected by the Colombian state for his work in promoting labor rights. The Socialist worker's Party asks that the Colombian government fully investigate these events, and provide greater protection to union leaders.

Union Highlights Cases of Wage Theft and Unsuitable Conditions (Santander)

On July 1, SINTRAIMAGRA, which represents workers in the foodstuffs industry, sent out a bulletin that looked to bring attention to unfair working conditions and wage theft in different locales of the Empresa Operadora Avícola S.A.S., a poultry-raising corporation. These included the refusal to increase wages after collective bargaining attempts, the doctoring of work hours in order to reduce pay, and the refusal to allow for lunch breaks.

The union asks that steps be taken to remedy these injustices, and that the government makes a greater effort in fostering inclusivity.