



## LATIN AMERICA TRADE COALITION

### *The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement* **Myths and Facts on Labor Violence in Colombia**

**MYTH:** “ ... the current rate of murders [among labor union members] still places the country in a class of its own.” — *Workers’ Rights, Violence and Impunity in Colombia,* AFL-CIO, January 9, 2008

**FACT:** The homicide rate among Colombian trade unionists (5 per 100,000 in 2007) is even lower than the U.S. homicide rate (5.6 per 100,000). New Orleans, Detroit, and Baltimore have murder rates that are far higher at 67, 46, and 45 per 100,000, respectively. There is no evidence that Colombian labor leaders are being targeted for assassination.

**MYTH:** “The government [of Colombia] has done nothing to effectively stop the death squads ... ” — *Ad by Change to Win, Roll Call,* March 12, 2008

**FACT:** Last year, the Colombian government spent \$38 million on a program to provide protection to labor union members and members of other vulnerable groups. More than 1,900 labor union members receive protection through this extremely successful program.

**MYTH:** “... Not a single assassin has been brought to justice.” — *Ad by Change to Win, Roll Call,* March 12, 2008

**FACT:** Since 2001, the Prosecutor General’s office has convicted 156 people in 73 cases involving trade unionists. With regard to 187 cases identified by Colombia’s labor unions as their top priorities for prosecution, 38 people were convicted in 2007 alone, with many others currently before the judiciary. The Prosecutor General’s office has received a 75% increase in funding over the past five years, allowing it to hire nearly a thousand new prosecutors and investigators.

**MYTH:** The Colombia trade agreement “adheres to the same failed NAFTA/CAFTA model which encourages industry to relocate in pursuit of the least stringent environmental and social standards.” — *Statement on U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement by Friends of the Earth and the Sierra Club,* March 12, 2008

**FACT:** The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement includes enforceable labor and environmental protections that emerged from the landmark bipartisan trade deal reached on May 10, 2007. Democratic leaders praised the inclusion of these protections in the U.S.-Peru Trade Promotion Agreement, and an overwhelming bipartisan majority in Congress approved that agreement in 2007. The U.S.-Colombia Trade Promotion Agreement includes the same exact language to guarantee labor and environmental protections as the agreement with Peru.