



Int Dept/KT/gp

DATE  
2010-04-29  
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Mr. Álvaro Uribe, President of the Republic  
of Colombia  
Palacio Nariño  
BOGOTA  
Colombia

### **Mass grave in La Macarena, Colombia**

The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) with 1.7 million members, and affiliated to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), is writing to express its very deep concern at the discovery of a common grave near to the Colombian town of La Macarena. We also condemn, in the strongest possible terms, the recent murder of Mr. Jhonny Hurtado, one of the human rights activists who denounced the existence of the grave. Mr. Hurtado used to be a trade union activist and had been forcibly displaced as a result of death threats.

We understand that an initial study carried out by the Special Investigation Unit of the National Prosecutor's Office estimated that there were approximately 2000 unidentified bodies in the common grave in La Macarena, a figure which coincides with that of an independent delegation of British parliamentarians, trade unionists and lawyers who visited the site in December 2009. This is deeply concerning given that well over 100 Colombian trade unionists have disappeared in recent years.

The LO understands that - contrary to claims by some official reports that the mass grave is part of the La Macarena municipal cemetery and contains bodies interred there over a period of 20 years - the facts, supported by photographic evidence are that a) it is an annex separate from the municipal cemetery and b) almost all the bodies were put there between 2002 and 2009.

Given the recent revelations, including those of the United Nations High Commissioner and their Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial executions, according to which the Colombian army has been involved in what the UN describes as "systematic" assassinations of Colombian civilians - you will understand the growing concern over what has happened in La Macarena - above all because the grave is next to the biggest military base in the region.

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**The Swedish Trade Union Confederation**

The murder, on 15 March this year, of one of the human rights activists most closely associated with revealing the situation in La Macarena – Jhonny Hurtado, chairperson of a local human rights committee – is also a cause for deep concern, as are the reports by witnesses who say they saw troops from mobile brigade no.7 near where he was killed.

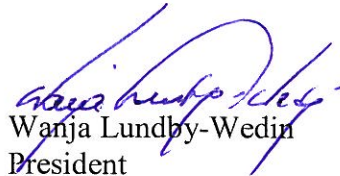
Mr. President, the LO joins with the ITUC in urging you to order an immediate, rigorous and transparent investigation into what happened in La Macarena and in calling on you and your government to make a firm commitment that you will:

- Ensure an immediate investigation into the circumstances of assassination of Jhonny Hurtado and bring those responsible to justice;
- Order the civic authorities to close the site of the mass grave until a rigorous investigation of the site has been carried out to avoid any material proof being altered;
- Allow international observers to monitor the investigation of the grave in La Macarena and an inter-institutional verification mission to visit the site as soon as possible. Such a mission should include representatives of the relevant structures of the Colombian state, delegates from human rights and trade union organisations, from the local communities around La Macarena, and participants from the international/diplomatic community.

The LO is also following closely the worrying situation in Colombia and the continued assassinations of our trade union colleagues in your country. The impunity enjoyed by those responsible for these killings is a matter of serious concern and we therefore insist on the need for you to act immediately to ensure that the crimes that have taken place in La Macarena are investigated and those responsible brought to trial.

Yours sincerely,

THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (LO)

  
Wanja Lundby-Wedin  
President