

For the life and dignity of Colombian workers

International Workers' Association

Colombia

67% living below poverty line

4,000 trades unionists killed

Multinationals profit

UK gives military aid

Por la vida y dignidad de los trabajadores colombianos

Asociacion Internacional de los Trabajadores

Colombia: poverty, terror and profit

According to the United Nations, 60% of Colombia's population lived below the poverty line in 1995. This had risen to 67% by 2001. During the same period inequality increased leaving the richest 10% of the population earning 60 times more than the poorest 10%.

Since 1988 4,000 trades union leaders have been killed by right-wing paramilitaries, creating a climate of terror which suits the interests of the state and multinational corporations but for which these can deny responsibility.

Human Rights Watch cites "abundant, credible evidence of continued collaboration with and support for paramilitary groups responsible for most human rights violations" by Colombian state security and armed forces. Under *Plan Colombia*, the United States has given Colombia \$1.3bn in military aid, allegedly to fight the War on Drugs.

UK involvement

The UK government has also given military aid to Colombia since 2003, including training for the Colombian armed forces. It refuses to disclose details of this training making its claims that this is in no way linked to human rights abuses difficult to verify. Nevertheless, in 2004 it claimed that "there has been progress in improving the human rights situation".

Just weeks after this declaration three trades unionists were killed by the Colombian army. The UK government has also refused to support an International Labour Organisation Commission of Inquiry into the murder of trades unionists in Colombia. It is no coincidence that British multinationals such as BP and Anglo American make huge profits in Colombia.

There are estimated to be between 30,000 and 50,000 Colombians living in the UK. Most are fleeing poverty and violence, although the government often refuses to recognise that people fleeing paramilitary violence are genuine refugees.

Further information from: solfed.org.uk/colombia

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