

A PETITION TO THE HOUSE OF COMMONS:

A CALL TO STOP THE CANADA-COLOMBIA TRADE DEAL

We, the undersigned citizens of Canada, draw the attention of the House of Commons to the following:

WHEREAS, the violence against workers and members of civil society by para-militaries in Colombia, who are closely associated with the current Uribe government, has been ongoing, with more than 2,200 trade unionists murdered since 1991, as well as a host of violence committed against indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians, human rights activists, workers, farmers, labour leaders and journalists;

WHEREAS, the Canada and Colombia so called “free trade” agreement was negotiated following a framework similar to the North American Free Trade Agreement (“NAFTA”) which has mainly benefited large multinational corporations without providing real benefits to working families;

WHEREAS, labour side agreements under NAFTA have not been effective in protecting improving labour standards, as has been the case in Mexico, where over 1 million agricultural jobs have been lost in Mexico since NAFTA was signed;

WHEREAS, the murder of labour and human rights activists has increased in 2008 in Colombia, while widespread and very serious human rights violations continue to be the daily reality;

WHEREAS, a review of the text of the Canada-Colombia trade deal confirms that the type of labour and environmental protection clauses being sought do not provide meaningful, effective protection and lack enforcement mechanisms;

WHEREAS, the labour protection clauses in the trade deal include as a penalty for lethal violence against workers, a token fine to be paid by the offending government into a ‘cooperation fund’, which makes a mockery of human rights;

WHEREAS, the offending government also benefits from that fund, which does nothing to address impunity and allows the continuation of violence;

WHEREAS, all trade agreements must be built upon the principles of fair trade, which fundamentally respect social justice, human rights, labour rights, and environmental stewardship as prerequisites to trade;

WHEREAS, Prime Minister Harper has decided to ignore these concerns and proceed without due diligence with regards to fair trade, human rights and the environment;

THEREFORE, your petitioners call on Parliament to reject the Canada-Colombia trade deal until an independent Human Rights Impact Assessment is carried out, the resulting concerns addressed, and that the agreement be renegotiated along the principles of fair trade which would take environmental and social impacts fully into account while genuinely respecting and enhancing labour rights and the rights of all affected parties.

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