A Litany of Lamentation and Hope

According to the United Steelworkers and the United Mineworkers, 22 trade unionists died this year in Colombia and 51 died last year, the largest number of murdered labor leaders in the world. Since the Obama and Santos administrations announced its “action plan” to address violence against workers, the killings have continued unabated. The killings of trade unionists in Colombia in 2011 has accelerated to a rate of nearly one unionist every seven days during May and June.

Such egregious and longstanding human rights abuses are why the PC(USA), the Presbyterian Church of Colombia and other groups oppose passage of the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.

Roughly 140 civil society activists have been killed in the first 10 months of President Manual Santos’ administration.

The enormity of such statistics is hard to grasp, so we are including here the names and information about the men and women killed this year, as well as a litany of lamentation and hope.

The Escuela Nacional Sindical – or the national labor college – has released the names of unionists dead this year to date:

1. **Luis Alberto Durante Álvarez**, member of the workers’ committee for the SINTRAINAGRO union, was murdered on September 3 in Apartadó, Antioquia.

2. **Tapías Jiménez Nallyd**, a teacher in the municipality of Arboletes and member of the Adida union, was killed on September 1. On September 14, his union called on the government to investigate the killing.
3. Luis Alfonso Díaz Villa was assassinated near his home. Díaz, who was a regional leader of the University Workers’ Union SINTRAUNICOL, and a security guard at the Monteria Public University in Cordoba Department, was shot four times.

4. María Eugenia Arango Zapata, a member of the ADIDA union, was killed on August 10 in Tarazá, Antioquia.

5. Eduardo Zuñiga, a banana plantation worker employed by the Sarapalma Company at the Las Ninas farm, and a member of the SINTRAINAGRO union, was killed in the municipality of Apartado on July 31.

6. Wimar Serna, also a banana plantation worker at the Las Ninas farm, and a member of the SINTRAINAGRO worker’s committee on the farm, was also killed in the municipality of Apartado on July 31.

7. Alejandro José Peñatalópez, a teacher and member of the teachers’ association of Cordoba, ADEMACOR, was murdered June 20. He disappeared after leaving school and his body showed signs of torture. He was hanged with barbed wire.

8. Jorge Eliecer de los Rios Cárdenas, a teacher, environmental campaigner and a member of the Ser union, was killed in Pereira on June 8.

9. Carlos Julio Gómez, a teacher and member of the Sutev union, was shot and killed May 29 in Cali.

10. Freddy Antonio Cuadrado Nuñez, a teacher and a member of the Edumagunion, was killed May 27 in Cienaga. He was shot in the head and killed as he celebrated his 46th birthday.

11. Carlos Arturo Castro Casas, 41, an engineer and a member of the Sintraemcali union and father of three, was shot in the neck by two armed men on May 23 in Cali.

12. Juan Carlos ChaguíCueter, a prison guard and a member of the Sigginpec union, was killed May 15 in Barranquilla.

13. Dionis Alfredo Sierra Vergara, an elementary school teacher and a member of the Ademacor union, was killed May 15 in La Apartada.

14. Luci Richardo Florez, 28, a teacher and a member of the Ademacor union, was shot dead by armed men on motorbikes on May 3 in Ayapel, while walking home with her mother.

15. Antonio Ramiro Muñoz Sánchez, a member of the Asotmem union, was killed April 8 in Puerto Boyaca. According to witnesses, he was shot repeatedly by two men riding a motorbike as he was leaving a union meeting. According to Justice for Colombia, the union was organizing workers and the local community to demand that oil companies hire local labor.

16. Héctor Orozco, 35, vice president of the Astracatol union and a father of three, was killed March 30 in Chaparral. Shortly before he died, Orozco reported to the local office of the Reiniciar non-governmental human rights organization that he and several other people had been threatened by an army office named John Jairo Velez.

17. Hernán Yesid Pinto Rincón, a member of the CGT union and founder of the national board of a new farmers’ organization, was killed March 19 in Tibacuy.

18. Carlos Alberto Ayala Moreno, a member of the Asepunion and director of the Caucasia Rural Education Institute was killed Feb. 5 in Puerto Asis. He was shot and killed by gunmen as he left his home.

19. Humberto de Jesús Espinoza Díaz, a teacher in the Mistrato Agricultural Institute and member of the Ser union, was shot and killed by armed men Jan. 30 in Mistrato.

20. Jairo Enrique Veloza Martínez, 35, a member of the Sigginpec union, was shot three times in the head by gunmen in Bogota.

21. Silverio Antonio Sanchez, 37, a member of the Ser union, died on Jan. 24 after an explosion in December which burned 80 percent of his body. Authorities believe the explosion was premeditated.

22. Manuel Esteban Tejada, a teacher and member of the Ademacor union, was shot and killed in his home on Jan 10 in Planeta.
Eternal God, in your perfect realm no sword is drawn but the sword of righteousness, and there is no strength but the strength of love. So mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince of Peace, as your children; to you be dominion and glory, now and forever.

O God, deliver our world from violence.

Grant, O God, that your holy and life-giving Spirit may so move every human heart, that the barriers which divide us may crumble, suspicions disappear, and hatreds cease, and that, with our divisions healed, we might live in justice and peace; through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God, deliver our world from economic violence.

Almighty God, guide the nations of the world into ways of justice and truth, and establish among them that peace which is the fruit of righteousness, that they may become the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

O God, deliver our world from the violence of greed.

Almighty God, in Jesus Christ you have ordered us to live as loving neighbors. Though we are scattered in different places, speak different words, or descend from different races, give us common concern, so that we may be one people, who share the governing of the world under your guiding purpose.

May greed, war, and lust for power be curbed, and all people enter the community of love promised in Jesus Christ our Lord.

O God, deliver our world from violence of abusive power.

Almighty God, your Son Jesus Christ dignified our labor by sharing our toil. Be with your people where they work; make those who carry on the industries and commerce of this and other lands responsive to your will; and to all of us, give pride in what we do and a just return for our labor; through your son, Jesus Christ.

O God, deliver our world from the violence of corruption.

High God, holy God, you rule the ways of peoples, and govern every earthly government. Work with those who work for peace. Make every person in authority an agent of your reconciliation, and every diplomat an ambassador of hope. Bring peace and goodwill among all people, fulfilling among us the promise made in Jesus Christ, who was born to save the world.

O God, deliver our world from the violence that abuses the earth.
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Almighty God,
in giving us dominion over things on earth, you made us co-workers in your creation.
Give us wisdom and reverence to use the resources of nature, so that no one may suffer
from our abuse of them, so that generations yet to come may continue to praise you
for your bounty;
through your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

**O God, deliver our world from the violence of indifference to the lives and the suffering of others.**

God of compassion, you watch our ways, and weave out of terrible happenings wonders of goodness and grace.
Surround those who have been shaken by tragedy with a sense of your present love, and hold them in faith.
Though they are lost in grief, may they find you and be comforted; through Jesus Christ, who was dead,
but lives and rules this world with you.

**O God, deliver our world from the violence that destroys lives.**

We give you thanks, O God, for all who have fought the good fight,
finished their race, and kept the faith ...
Give us the grace to follow them as they followed Christ.
Bring us, with them, to those things which no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
which you have prepared for those who love you.
To your name, with the church on earth and church in heaven, we ascribe all honor and glory,
forever and ever.

**O God, deliver us into life eternal.**

Ever faithful God, you have knit us together as one body in Christ those who have been your people
in all times and places.
Keep us in communion with your saints, following their example of faith and life, until that day
when we shall dwell with them in the joy of your eternal kingdom.

**Amen.**

*All of the prayers are contained in the Book of Common Worship, published by the Westminster/John Knox Press.*