

Unite House
128 Theobald's Road
London WC1X 8TN

Tel: 020 7611 2500
Fax: 020 7611 2555



CENTRAL OFFICE

Mr Colin Martin-Reynolds CMG Her Majesty's Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia
Carrera 9, No 76-49, Piso 8
Edificio ING Barings, Bogotá
Bogotá
Colombia –
embajadorbogota@fco.gov.uk

H.E. Ms. Alison Milton Republic of Ireland Ambassador to the Republic of Colombia
Oficina 1605
Cra 9 #115-30 Edificio Tierra Firme,
Bogotá
eirlanda@cancilleria.gov.co

14 December 2020

Dear Ambassadors,

Unite the union is appalled at the murder of yet another trade unionist in our sister union, FENSUAGRO, whose members face terrible levels of violence simply for exercising their democratic rights as citizens and trade unionists.

Unite has a long-running partnership with FENSUAGRO and our members have met with FENSUAGRO trade unionists on delegations to Colombia organised by the British-Irish organisation, Justice for Colombia (JFC).

On 23 November, Edgar Hernández was killed in Puerto Caicedo, Putumayo. As well as a FENSUAGRO trade unionist, Edgar was community president of the village of La Independencia and a member of the Patriotic March social-political organisation. He is at least the third FENSUAGRO member murdered in the last two months, following the deaths of Jayder Quintana on 3 October and Nelson Ramos Barrera on 13 October. More than ten FENSUAGRO members have been killed in 2020 alone.

These killings come amid a growing human rights crisis in Colombia which has seen hundreds of community leaders, trade unionists and human rights defenders murdered in the four years since the country's historic peace agreement was signed. The International Trade Union Confederation consistently names Colombia as the world's most dangerous country for trade unionists, with the latest ITUC figures documenting fourteen killings between January 2019 and April 2020.

Several other murders of trade unionists have been carried out since the ITUC's findings were published. In addition to the three murdered FENSUAGRO members, Ovidio Baena of the USO oil workers union was killed in July and two teachers affiliated to FECODE, Douglas Cortés Mosquera and Byron Revelo Insuasty, were killed over the weekend of 21-22 November.

With trade unionists and social activists facing high levels of insecurity, it is extremely alarming that the CUT trade union confederation and FECODE have accused members of the president's political party, the Democratic Centre, of stigmatising trade unionists. Senators Carlos Felipe Mejía and María Fernanda Cabal are among those to have recently expressed inflammatory discourse towards trade union activity. With trade unionists being killed on a regular basis, we condemn in absolute terms these reprehensible actions and call on President Duque to publicly reject the dangerous discourse being promoted by sections of his party.

Unite has repeatedly voiced our concerns over anti-trade union violence to the Colombian government yet we have received little response and therefore ask that you raise these points on our behalf. We also hope you will remind the government of civil society's democratic right to engage in peaceful forms of political organisation, including trade unionism and protest.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Len m Cluskey'.

Len McCluskey
General Secretary, Unite

C.C. Justice for Colombia