

Resolution to Boycott Coca-Cola Beverages Because of Widespread Labor, Human Rights & Environmental Abuses

WHEREAS, in 2001 and 2006, lawsuits were filed in the United States against The Coca-Cola Co. headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia, and its bottlers in Colombia charging that the bottlers “contracted with or otherwise directed paramilitary security forces that utilized extreme violence and murdered, tortured, unlawfully detained or otherwise silenced trade union leaders;”

WHEREAS, the lawsuits were filed on behalf of SINALTRAINAL – the major union representing Coca-Cola workers in Colombia – several of its members and the survivors of Isidro Gil and Adolfo de Jesus Munera, two of its murdered officers;

WHEREAS, a documentary film called “The Coca-Cola Case” was just released chronicling Sinaltrainal’s legal battle against the Coca-Cola Co. in the U.S. and the international solidarity movement that has followed;

WHEREAS, a fact-finding delegation to Colombia in 2004 led by a former New York City Council Member issued a report concluding that Coca-Cola is “complicit in human rights abuses in Colombia” and that its “complicity is deepened by its repeated pattern of bringing criminal charges against union activists who have spoken out about the company’s collusion with the paramilitaries;”

WHEREAS, the report further concludes “that Coca-Cola bears responsibility for the campaign of terror leveled at its workers is unavoidable. The company has pressured workers to resign their union membership and contractual rights, and fired workers who refused to do so...Most troubling to the delegation were the persistent allegations that paramilitary violence against workers was done with the knowledge of and likely under the direction of company managers...;”

WHEREAS, On February 25, 2010 a lawsuit was filed on behalf of eight plaintiffs in the Supreme Court of the State of New York against The Coca-Cola Co. and Coke processing and bottling plants in Guatemala. This case involves charges of murder, rape and torture. The plaintiffs include union leaders and family members;

WHEREAS, campaigns against Coca-Cola are growing worldwide because of labor, human rights and/or environmental abuses in Chile, Colombia, El Salvador, Ghana, Guatemala, Haiti, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Russia, Turkey, the United States, Venezuela and other countries;

WHEREAS, it has been reported that The Coca-Cola Co. has been accused of benefiting from prison labor in China (*BBC News*, 5/21/07);

WHEREAS, a report released in Beijing on December 14, 2008, exposed extensive abuse of workers in Coca-Cola bottling plants in China. “These employees are involved in the most dangerous, intense and tiresome labor, work the longest hours, but receive the lowest wage and face arrears with and even cutbacks on their pay.” said a 28-page report written by seven university students after a month of participatory research...” The *China Daily* [12/16/08] said the report “accused the company of exploiting the workers -- some of whom worked more than 100 hours of overtime per month, above the 36 hour maximum stipulated by law - paying them the minimum wage and giving them few rights.”

WHEREAS, Coca-Cola has been criticized for massive water exploitation and discriminatory workplace practices in Mexico and the *Chicago Tribune* (10/30/06) reported, “many U.S. corporations — including Coca-Cola...are engaging in hiring practices that appear to violate their U.S. fair employment policies.” It noted, “Job seekers [in Mexico] considered too old, too chunky or too dark are screened out by companies that sometimes specify the ideal candidate’s marital status, height, weight, tone of voice, even the part of town in which the person should reside...”

WHEREAS, the Environmental Law Research Center in Geneva issued a report in May 2007 concluding that “the availability of good quality water for drinking purposes and agriculture [in India] has been affected dangerously due to the activity of the Company [The Coca-Cola Co.]. Apart from that, the Company had also polluted the agricultural lands by depositing hazardous wastes. All these point to the gross violation of the basic human rights, that is, the right to life, right to livelihood and the violation of the pollution control laws.”

WHEREAS, one Coca-Cola plant has been shut down since 2004 due to protests and the *Atlanta-Journal Constitution* (12/16/07) reported that India’s Kerala State Pollution Control Board sent a letter to Coke’s India head office in September 2007 “accusing the company of polluting with cadmium and asking executives why they should not face criminal prosecution.”

WHEREAS, an Indian unit of Coca-Cola Co has been found responsible by a state committee and asked to pay \$47 million “for causing environmental damage at its bottling plant in the southern Indian state of Kerala. A state government panel said Coca-Cola's subsidiary, Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Pvt Ltd (HCBPL), was responsible for depleting groundwater and dumping toxic waste around its Palakkad plant between 1999 and 2004.” (*Reuters* 3/23/10)

WHEREAS, on Nov. 19, 2007, a documentary film, “Mark Thomas on Coca-Cola” broadcast nationally in England highlighted Coke’s human rights and environmental abuses in Colombia and India, its offensive history of racial discrimination, and how Coke continues to benefit from hazardous child labor cutting sugar cane illegally in El Salvador;

WHEREAS, a well-documented book, “Belching Out the Devil,” by Mark Thomas, recently published in the U.S. in Spring 2009, was reviewed in major U.S. publications. *Newsweek* (6/6/09) stated: “...he writes, the iconic white-and-red ribbon is a slick PR blindfold for child labor, union crackdowns and even violence, all to protect cash flow and the supply chain...”

WHEREAS, more than 50 colleges and universities have removed Coca-Cola products from their campuses, including large universities like Rutgers, DePaul and State University of New York Stony Brook, because of widespread labor, human rights and environmental abuses;

WHEREAS, the website KillerCoke.org documents past and current massive labor, human rights and environmental abuses worldwide;

WHEREAS, no organization or public institution concerned with labor, human rights or environmental rights should lend its name and credibility to Coca-Cola by serving as a marketplace or venue for its sales and advertising;

RESOLVED, that the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, UAW Local 2320 will ban all Coke products from all its meetings and events;

RESOLVED, that the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, UAW Local 2320, calls on its members to initiate and support campaigns in schools, labor unions and public institutions, etc. to similarly hold The Coca-Cola Company accountable by removing all Coke machines and Coke beverages and banning the sale and advertising of Coke products;

RESOLVED, that the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, UAW Local 2320 calls on the United Auto Workers (UAW) and all other unions to adopt a similar Resolution;

RESOLVED, that until The Coca-Cola Company can prove that it has taken genuine remedial actions to become a responsible corporate citizen, the call for this ban on Coca-Cola products by the National Organization of Legal Service Workers, UAW Local 2320 will remain in effect.