

COLOMBIA DEATH SQUADS MURDER ONE TEACHER EVERY TWO WEEKS!

PSC Supports the Colombia Teachers' Strike Oct. 12

Colombia is the most dangerous place in the world to be a unionist: three-quarters of all murders of trade unionists occur in Colombia, and 23 teachers, 60% of them women, have been killed by right-wing paramilitaries this year. US military aid under Plan Colombia has been used by paramilitary death squads. According to Amnesty International, "Colombia is the third largest recipient of US military aid in the world. Despite compelling evidence that the Colombian military are violating human rights, either directly or in collusion with paramilitary groups, the US government has agreed to allow its military assistance to be used for counter-insurgency activities, with one clear and tragic result - a greater targeting of the civilian population" (4/23/04). Now FECODE, the Federación Colombiana de Educadores (Colombian Teachers Union), is calling a one-day national strike against the death squads and the Uribe government, which allows these killings to go on with impunity. FECODE has asked US teachers and students to support the strike and oppose the US military aid that is killing them.

The national strike October 12 has as its main demand the teachers' right to life itself. The teachers also demand that the government commit itself to the public education system and abandon its policy of gradual, under-the-table privatization. Other demands are for the right to health care, pensions, and retirement benefits, all threatened with deep cuts, and an end to the freeze on salaries and promotions. On October 12 FECODE will be joining CUT, the federation of all the unions in Colombia, and the Broad Democratic Coalition (the political opposition to Uribe), which have together called for a one-day general strike. FECODE has asked us to picket Colombian consulates October 12, and to join in a letter-writing campaign by US rank-and-file teachers to show Uribe and the US Congress (which approves Plan Colombia) that FECODE has international support. Other Latin American and European unions are joining in. The strike is endorsed by Education International, the AFT (American Federation of Teachers) and the NEA (National Education Association).

By supporting their strike locally, we join forces against a common enemy, those who would destroy public education. Here as in Colombia, we see more privatization, tuition hikes, budget cuts, over-use of standardized tests, and the infiltration of corporations and the military into education. The situation in Colombia is more extreme, but attacks on teachers' unions there are really designed to crush teachers' resistance to the same conservative agenda against public education we are fighting in New York.

**STRIKE SUPPORT RALLY AT COLOMBIAN CONSULATE:
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 12, 4-6PM, AT 10 E. 46th STREET & MADISON**

WRITE IN SUPPORT: GO TO "ACT NOW" AT WWW.PSC-CUNY.ORG

HELP ORGANIZE: sign up at communications@psc-cuny.org.