

united students against sweatshops

1150 17th St. NW Suite 300 Washington DC 20036; tel: 202-NOSWEAT; fax: 202-293-5308 www.studentsagainstsweatshops.org



Arthur Tannenbaum,

I am writing this letter on behalf of United Students Against Sweatshops and the 250 student chapters throughout the United States and Canada whom we represent. As you may know, for the past five years students on high school and university campuses in the United States, Canada, England, Germany, and around the world have been organizing to draw attention to Coca-Cola's crimes in Colombia, India, Turkey, Indonesia, Guatemala, and around the world. The most publicized atrocities have been committed in Colombia, where Coca-Cola has taken active steps to destroy the union representing beverage workers throughout the country, SINALTRAINAL. This illegal anti-union campaign has included the firing of union members, the threatening, kidnapping, and harassment of union leaders and their families, and, in a number of documented cases, cooperation with paramilitaries in the actual murder of union representatives. This is a pattern of behavior that we have seen all around the world, with Coke illegally firing and beating union members in Turkey, firing workers in Indonesia simply for distributing pro-union literature, threatening workers in Guatemala with death, and even participating in illegal anti-union campaigns here in the United States. In addition, community groups throughout the nation of India have been engaged in a decades long struggle to expel Coca-Cola from their country in response to the environmental damage that their bottling plants have inflicted on regions that have already been devastated by a major draught.

It was for all of these reasons that, in 2005, your university chose to terminate its relationship with Coca-Cola. I am writing today to inform you that, since that time, Coca-Cola has done nothing to address any of these issues. Starting in the spring of 2006, Coca-Cola began telling universities and the general public that it intended to cooperate with the International Labor Organization in an investigation of Coca-Cola bottling plants. It has now been more than one and a half years since Coca-Cola promised that this investigation would be completed, and it has not even begun. As if this weren't enough, it has now become clear that the ILO never intended to do any investigation, and that Coca-Cola knew all along that the ILO was only going to do a general assessment of the right to organize in Colombia that not only would not deal with Coca-Cola directly, but would not even include an investigation into the past murders. Despite the fact that this is now public knowledge, Coca-Cola continues to lie to the university community, promising them an investigation that was never intended to happen in the first place.

In addition to their refusal to cooperate in any investigation, it has become clear that the same problems that existed within their supply chain in 2005 continue to exist. Just this last year, leaders of the SINALTRAINAL union in Colombia received another series of death threats, illustrating that they are just as much at risk today as they were in 2005. Communities in India continue to demand that Coca-Cola be expelled from their country, and yet Coca-Cola still steals water from draught infested regions.

It is for these reasons that it is imperative that New York University not allow Coca-Cola back on your campus. In 2005 your relationship with Coca-Cola was terminated because of their abysmal human rights record and their refusal to take any steps to address the issues. Two years

later, they have done nothing to change this, and all of the problems that sparked your original decision continue or, in some cases, have actually gotten worse. To allow them back onto your campus would send a signal to the rest of the university community that Coca-Cola has cleaned up its act, when they clearly have not. If we are to ever ensure that Coca-Cola takes responsibility for their crimes, and therefore ensure that the lives of workers in Colombia are not put at risk every day, we must stand by our decisions until these issues are actually addressed. I am writing today to let you know that, as of now, they have not, and I hope that you take this into consideration when making your decision concerning the future of Coca-Cola at NYU.

Sincerely,

Zack Knorr

International Campaigns Coordinator for United Students Against Sweatshops