

# **Service Employees International Union Local 415 Resolution to Support Protection for Trade Unionists in Colombia and Boycott Coca-Cola**

**WHEREAS**, Colombia is the most dangerous country in the world for trade unionists, according to the U.S. State Department's 2003 Human Rights Report. According to the ENS (Colombia's National Trade Union School), 90 union activists were killed during 2003, more than in all other countries combined; and

**WHEREAS**, Paramilitary and guerrilla violence has severely affected Colombia's trade unions. Armed right-wing paramilitary groups, with links to the Colombian military, are responsible for the majority of the murders. Over 2,000 Colombian trade unionists have been assassinated since 1991; and

**WHEREAS**, The Colombian armed forces have failed to take credible and sufficient action to sever the systematic ties between its members and the paramilitary forces of the AUC (United Self-Defense of Colombia); and

**WHEREAS**, Measures adopted by the Colombian government to protect union leaders have been inadequate and actually decreased in 2003. The Colombian government has failed to investigate, prosecute and bring to justice those responsible for murders of trade unionists, with more than 99% of the murders of Colombian trade unionists having gone unpunished; and

**WHEREAS**, Colombia government officials in the present administration have likened labor leaders and other human rights activists to guerrilla groups, thereby facilitating attacks on these civil society groups by paramilitaries. Direct violations of human rights of trade unionists by the Colombian government itself have also increased since the present administration took office; and

**WHEREAS**, U.S. military aid to Colombia has spiraled from \$100 million in 1998 to over a half billion dollars this year and is expected to increase again in 2005, bringing U.S. spending in Colombia to over \$3 billion since 2000, 80% of which has been for military and police aid; and

**WHEREAS**, The Bush Administration has begun negotiating a free trade agreement with Colombia (Andean Free Trade Agreement, AFTA), that would weaken current U.S. policy supporting workers in Colombia since the current Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Enforcement Act (ATPDEA) has much stronger mechanisms to sanction failures to protect workers in Colombia; and

**WHEREAS**, Some multinational corporations from the U.S. and elsewhere have taken advantage of an environment in which paramilitaries and other illegal armed groups attack unions attempting to organize in and negotiate with said companies. This includes Coca Cola, one of the worst corporate supporters of the paramilitary death squads, which directly resulted in the murder of nine members of SINALTRAINAL, the national food and beverage workers union representing workers at Coca Cola; and

**WHEREAS**, Sun Trust Banks, Inc. (303 Peachtree Street, N.E., Atlanta, GA 30308) has been intimately linked with Coca-Cola since 1919, shares several board members with Coke, and is now Coke's largest corporate shareholder and a major creditor of Coca-Cola; now

**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED**, That the Service Employees International Union Local 415 support our Colombian brothers and sisters by actively lobbying our Congressional representatives for changes in U.S. policy toward Colombia that would:

- Reduce U.S. aid to the Colombian military and reduce U.S. military involvement in Colombia, and
- Maintain and enforce existing human rights conditions on U.S. assistance, and

- Require the Colombian government to take action to sever links between its military forces and the paramilitaries and to arrest and prosecute the killers of union members and other civilians, and
- Support efforts to achieve a negotiated solution to the military conflict, and
- Require that any trade agreement with Colombia contain within it both protections for workers rights as outlined in the 1998 ILO Declaration of Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work and mechanisms to sanction the failure to protect these rights; and

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, That the Service Employees International Union Local 415 support our Colombian brothers and sisters by:

- Joining in the world-wide boycott of all Coca-Cola products and encouraging Local 415 members to observe the boycott of Killer Coke, and
- Urging SEIU, the AFL-CIO, and other labor organizations to divest all funds and sever all business ties with Sun Trust Bank, Inc., until such time as the bank severs all ties with Coca-Cola.

SEIU Local 415, Santa Cruz County, California