



News - Country: Colombia - Theme: Human and Trade Union Rights

## El condemns the murders of more teachers in Colombia <sup>(26</sup>

June 2011)

EI condemns and expresses its deep sorrow at the murders of four more teachers in Colombia: Dionis Alfredo Sierra Vergara was murdered on 15 May; Carlos Julio Gómez was shot on 26 May; Freddy Antonio Cuadrado Núñez was killed on 27 May, and Alejandro José Peñata López on 20 June. They were all members of the Asociación de Maestros de Córdoba – ADEMACOR (teachers' association of Córdoba) and the SUTEV (Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Valle).



Photo by Robert Thijsse via Flickr

Dionis Alfredo Sierra Vergara was a primary school teacher. According to local witnesses, Sierra Vergara received a call on his mobile phone; he went outside to answer it and was attacked by unknown armed assailants who shot him three times leading to his immediate death. Sierra had been celebrating Teachers' Day and a colleague's birthday with his fellow teachers.

Carlos Julio Gómez, who taught at the General Santander School in Cali was a member of the education workers' union SUTEV. He was seriously injured by unknown assailants with firearms on the morning of 26 May and was taken to Clínica Rey David hospital in Cali where he died on 29 May.

Freddy Antonio Cuadrado Núñez, who taught at the Isaac J. Pereira School, was killed on 27 May in Ciénaga, Magdalena. He was shot in the head by a hired gunman whilst celebrating his 46<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Alejandro José Peñata disappeared as he left the school where he worked as co-ordinator. His family and friends launched a search and he was found in a small village. His body displayed signs of torture and he had been hung with barbed wire. His motorbike and documents were discovered at the scene which makes it clear that this was not a robbery.

EI condemns the constant persecution and violence against teachers in Colombia. In the Department of Córdoba alone, these new murders bring to 20 the total number of male and female teachers killed from December 2008 to date. The context of almost total impunity for these murders has led to an alarming humanitarian crisis in the education sector and has put teaching and trade union actions at risk and clearly refutes the Colombian governments' statements in international forums about human rights' improvements.

In a call to Colombia's President Santos, EI General Secretary, Fred van Leeuwen, has urged the Colombian authorities to "act with the utmost speed to ensure that these crimes are investigated and solved and that all those responsible for these crimes, either directly or indirectly, are punished. It is essential to break the vicious circle of violence and impunity that reigns in Colombia. We want to see the human rights' improvements announced by the Colombian government."

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