

## **OFFICE OF U.S. SENATOR SHERROD BROWN**

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### **BROWN, SENATORS CALL ON BUSH ADMINISTRATION TO ADDRESS ONGOING VIOLENCE IN COLOMBIA**

**WASHINGTON, DC – As Senator John McCain (R-AZ) toured Colombia today in support of a proposed free trade agreement (FTA) with the South American country, Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Robert C. Byrd (D-W.Va), Debbie Stabenow, (D-MI), Bob Casey (D-PA), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) sent a letter to President George W. Bush about the agreement.**

In the letter, the Senators expressed concern about what they called the administration's "dismissive attitude toward ongoing violence in Colombia," while actively trying to force a Colombian FTA through Congress.

The administration has been strongly criticized by labor, faith based, and human rights groups for negotiating the FTA with Colombia despite the continuing persecution – including murder – of labor leaders in that country.

"There is strong evidence that this deteriorating situation stems from continued lapses by the Colombian government. These issues must be addressed by the Colombian government before we can even consider a free trade agreement," wrote the Senators.

According to The Escuela Sindical (ENS) an independent non-governmental organization that tracks labor statistics in Colombia, 39 trade unionists were murdered in 2007 with 25 murdered so far this year. The letter also cites as cause for concern possible Colombian government involvement in the violence against labor leaders as well as a recent build up in arms by the Black Eagles, a paramilitary group that has been targeting trade unionists in Colombia.

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