



United Steelworkers of America

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AFL-CIO-CLC

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Leo W. Gerard
International President

March 21, 2005

TO: ALL MEMBERS OF THE SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE

Dear Senator:

RE: Anti-CAFTA Guatemala Protestors Killed Deserves Investigation

The killing of two demonstrators on March 15 in Guatemalan protests against the proposed Central America Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA) has met strong condemnation from the USWA and the international trade union movement.

Government forces and police using tear gas, water cannons and armored vehicles to end the protests have subsequently issued arrest warrants for trade unionists involved in the demonstrations. There have been reports of police surrounding the headquarters of Guatemala's trade unions under orders to capture trade union leaders.

In addition to the two protesters who were killed, there are also reports of many others who have been critically injured following police attacks on crowds that included women and children.

The USWA and its membership support the right of free and independent unions to participate in democratic and non-violent protests and civil dialogue on proposed legislation that will affect them. It was the Guatemalan Government's use of violent force to stop peaceful civil protest that permitted the Guatemalan National Assembly and President Oscar Berger to expedite approval of CAFTA.

As you proceed with hearings on the U.S. approval process for CAFTA, I would urge a full investigation by your committee of Guatemalan government suppression of the organized opposition to CAFTA. If the democratic rights of assembly and speech are not respected, then there are grounds for our political leadership to oppose U.S. approval of the proposed treaty.

Sincerely,

Leo W. Gerard
International President

c: John R. Hamilton, Ambassador, U.S. Embassy of Guatemala
Guatemala Human Rights Commission
Linda-Chavez Thompson, Executive Vice President, AFL-CIO
Marcello Malentacchi, IMF General Secretary
Fred Higgs, ICEM General Secretary