

Colombia NAFTA Expansion: Economic and Human Rights Nightmare

Plus, Colombia has one of the world's worst human-rights records. More labor unionists are assassinated here each year than in the rest of the world combined. There is systematic violence against Afro-Colombians, indigenous people and *campesino* farmers/ The perpetrators, who have often included the country's military, remain free and unprosecuted,. Activists here and there have demanded that this behavior END before ANY trade agreement is considered.

Despite clear statements from then-candidate Obama opposing the FTA, including his famous presidential debate statement on Colombian labor abuses, corporate interests hope to get President Obama to adopt this Bush hangover deal his own. Obama administration officials have said some changes are needed to the deal before it is sent to Congress for a vote. But, they said the same about the Korea trade deal and did not fix the severe problems in that Bush text.

Adopting the Colombia deal would be a serious political and policy mistake: after living through the NAFTA era of depressed wages, devastated manufacturing jobs, and gutted environmental and food-safety protections, the American people have repeatedly spoken at the voting booth and in polls that more of the same trade policy is unacceptable. And the Colombia deal is most offensive. Obama made election commitments to turn the page on the failed trade policies of the past. **We must speak up now and tell Obama and Congress to shelve this offensive trade deal.**

Call the U.S. Capitol Today 202-224-3121 to be connected to your House Representative. Then ask to get transferred to your Senators.

- ❖ Just give your zip code to be connected to your House Representative if you are not sure who he or she is! When you are connected, ask for the “trade staffer”. Tell him or her that you oppose the Colombia Free Trade Agreement.
- ❖ Ask for your Representative and Senators’ to communicate their positions **in writing** by email or regular mail. After you’ve called, share with us what you were told. This is key to our holding Congress accountable. Contact Beatriz Lopez at Public Citizen at jploeser@citizen.org or (202) 454-5140.

Talking Points on U.S.-Colombia “Free Trade Agreement” (FTA):

Unless and until union, Afro-Colombian and other rights defenders are not subjected to violence for a sustained period of time, a significant portion of lands illegally-seized from Afro-Colombian, indigenous and other communities are returned and the backlog of impunity cases are acted upon, it is simply inappropriate to consider any deal with Colombia. It's impossible to imagine Congress agreeing to a trade pact with human rights violators Burma or Sudan. We have to make clear a deal with Colombia is just as outrageous. Nearly 2,860 unionists have been killed since 1986 – more than the rest of the world combined. Less than six percent of unionist murders have been prosecuted. Nearly 600 unionists have been murdered since the former right-wing president, Álvaro Uribe, and his protégé and current president Juan Manuel Santos have been in power. Human-rights groups have documented collusion between the Colombian government and murderous paramilitary groups. And the number of unionists killed in 2010 (51) represented a nine percent increase over 2009 and up from the 39 when the FTA was signed in 2007. This when the Colombian government is under maximum scrutiny. The pact's corporate boosters argue that it is critical to U.S. national security – saying it bolsters Colombia against populist governments in the region. This is idiotic: it is precisely the damage caused by NAFTA-style policies that turns people against the U.S. and leads to the economic instability on which populism feeds. Moreover, once we allow brutal regimes permanent access to our market, we lose whatever leverage we might have had to improve human rights.

“The United States is spending billions trying to eradicate the cocaine trade and here we are giving them an incentive to grow more coca.” -Joseph Stiglitz, Nobel Laureate and former World Bank Chief Economist on threat of the Colombia FTA.

With an FTA without agricultural protections, rural Colombians “would have no more than three options: migration to the cities or to other countries (especially the United States), working in drug cultivation zones, or affiliating with illegal armed groups.” –Colombian Government's Agriculture Ministry

The Colombia FTA is a threat to regional and international security: The FTA's agricultural rules will devastate small Colombian farmers, just as NAFTA's did in Mexico. Displaced *campesinos* would add to the over 3 million Colombians already uprooted by that country's half-century long civil war. As the Colombian government's own agriculture ministry concluded, the FTA will eliminate 35 percent of the jobs in crucial agriculture sectors like corn, rice, beans and more. *Another genius Bush-holdover foreign policy: create more instability in a fragile, war-torn region just so big corporations can make extra profits.*

The Colombia FTA endangers the environment – targeting the Amazon, the lungs of the planet. The upper Amazon basin in Colombia is among the most bio-diverse areas on earth, but is also very much at risk. Deforestation, horrific pollution, and health disasters from oil production and mining are widespread already. The special foreign investor privileges in the FTA empowers corporations to pillage the area for timber, mineral and energy resources, and would chill direly needed efforts to protect the Amazon basin. *Deals like the Colombia FTA gut environmental protections. These NAFTA-style investor rights also encourage corporations to ship U.S. jobs away and push down the wages of jobs staying here.*

The Colombia FTA limits financial regulation. The Colombia FTA was written before the recession & Wall Street crisis, so it contains many provisions that restrict the ability of the government to regulate the financial sector. The pact commits its signatory countries to **refrain** from limiting the size of financial institutions, banning toxic derivatives, or controlling destabilizing capital flights and floods. This interference with re-regulation of the financial sector could leave the United States vulnerable to yet another financial crisis caused by risky Wall Street gambling.

More NAFTA is bad for our economy. With a massive U.S. trade deficit, and a major U.S. export being our best jobs and manufacturing base, we can't afford any more NAFTA-style trade deals. *We must change this broken trade model – as President Obama promised during his election – not expand it!*

For More Information about the Colombia-U.S. FTA and other bad trade deals, visit www.tradewatch.org