

DRAFT

STATEMENT OF CALL/ACAMS ON THE URGENT SITUATION IN COLOMBIA

October 2005

Trade unionists in Colombia have been subject to violent attacks for years, and the situation is becoming even more serious. As reported by the International Labour Organization, Colombia holds the grim record for the highest level of violence against labour leaders, with 184 trade unionists killed in 2002 and 90 in 2003. Assassinations, death threats, detentions and other forms of persecution continue. Amnesty International reports that the human rights situation faced by trade unionists in Colombia remains critical. Amnesty International reports that the majority of human rights abuses against trade unionists are committed by army-backed paramilitaries and the security forces. In March 2004 the International Commission for Labour Rights (ICLR), based in New York, U.S.A., sent a mission of legal experts to Colombia to investigate violations of the right to life and liberty of trade unionists, the crisis of impunity that surrounds these violations and the systemic and systematic failings in the Colombian justice system that allow the violations to continue. The ICLR mission reported that Colombia's trade unionists experience an astounding array of attacks upon their lives, their personal safety, their human rights and their trade union rights.

The Canadian Association of Labour Lawyers/Association canadienne des avocats du mouvement syndical calls on the Colombian authorities to:

- take immediate action to dismantle paramilitary groups
- take immediate action to stop actions by the Colombian security forces against trade unionists and lawyers
- take immediate action to guarantee the safety of trade unionists and their families
- carry out a full and impartial investigation into the deaths, threats and other human rights abuses committed against trade unionists