

Coca Cola Workers Reinitiate Hunger Strike due to the Company's Failure to Fulfil its Commitments

21 November 2016

From 5.30AM on the 21st of November 2016, several Coca Cola workers affiliated to Sinaltrainal declared a hunger strike at the bottling plant of the multinational located in the city of Bucaramanga, in the department of Santander in Colombia.

On the 4th of November, the workers from Bucaramanga and Medellin who had declared a hunger strike on the 31st of October agreed to terminate the hunger strike. They did so following declarations by representatives of Coca Cola that they were prepared to negotiate in good faith, commitments they made in a meeting in which the Deputy Minister of Labour was present.

The multinational promised to meet with representatives of Sinaltrainal on the 11th of November to work out a methodology for national and regional meetings in which the problematic labour/management relations would be discussed and solutions sought in the respective areas. The company also guaranteed that it would protect the life and integrity of the workers and respect the right of association and to form trade unions. Additionally, and in accordance with a demand made by the Ministry for Labour, the company promised to terminate two dismissals of specific employees which were being processed in Santa Marta and Bucaramanga. But to everyone's surprise, as soon as the hunger strike was declared over Coca Cola notified several workers affiliated with Sinaltrainal (Juan Manuel Concha, Álvaro Navarro, Alexander Rincón and Javier Correa) that they were going to be dismissed due to their participation in the protest in front of Coca Cola's bottling plant in Bucaramanga on the 3rd of November in support of the workers that were on hunger strike.

In addition to this treacherous manoeuvre carried out after the workers had terminated the hunger strike, Coca Cola and its local representatives proceeded to violate the established legal procedures to be followed in the case of dismissals of employees. Before initiating the formal steps required, representatives of the multinational sought out the workers they had targeted for dismissal in their houses (among many other irregularities), and arranged for functionaries from the company to fabricate allegations against the workers in order to justify their devious intention to punish the workers that participated in the protest by way of unjust dismissals.

We demand intervention by the competent authorities to stop the abuses that are being committed in Colombia by the multinational Coca Cola; that it be forced to respect the right of free association and the right to form trade unions; that the company cease its policy of persecution of the trade union Sinaltrainal and its members, and agree to respect and protect the life and integrity of its workers and their families; that the company revoke the illegal and aggressive disciplinary proceedings seeking to dismiss workers involved in supporting the protests against Coca Cola and commit itself to respect the rights of all workers at their facilities, including the guarantee of adequate medical treatment and working conditions for all workers suffering from illness or sickness (particularly in the case of Sinaltrainal member Andrés Olivares, who is currently gravely ill - the company is trying to persuade him to accept a derisory redundancy package instead of fulfilling its obligation to provide appropriate health care); that the company immediately resolve the problems of pollution and unsanitary working conditions that exist at many of their plants.

We request immediate solidarity with our workers, in particular that supporting letters be forwarded to Mr Carlos Dueñas, Vice President of Human Resources, Coca Cola FEMSA, carlos.duenas@kof.com.mx – with a copy forwarded to Sinaltrainal via galvisgalvis@yahoo.es
Sinaltrainal Continues the Struggle for Just Working Conditions