



The Public Eye Positive Award 2009 für most courageous employee goes to

**Jairo Quiroz Delgado and**

**Freddy Lozano**

**Acceptance address by Freddy Lozano, President of Sintracarbón Union Local, Puerto Bolivar**

According to the Colombian information system about forced displacements and human rights abuses, 270,000 people were forced to leave their homes because of armed conflicts in the second half of 2008 alone. 45 trade unionists were killed in Colombia last year. Many of our colleagues go into exile because various forms of violence threaten our life, our physical integrity and our freedom of movement. Colombia's mining sector, which is entirely in the hands of multinational corporations, has contributed its share to this exodus.

In 2000, when the violent displacement of the people of Tabaco began, Sintracarbón decided to defend the interests and rights of the local population in the areas surrounding the coal-mine of El Cerrejón. At the time, the company Cerrejón was owned by the mining corporations BHP Billiton, Anglo American, and Glencore (50%) and by the Exxon daughter Intercor (50%). Our union local meanwhile built a network of strategic alliances with human rights organizations like the Arbeitsgruppe Schweiz-Kolumbien, the Colombia Solidarity Campaign in the UK, Witness for Peace in the US, and with labor unions in the US and Canada. The activities of this network – public indictments, attendance at stockholder meetings of mine owners, or talks with corporate leaders and government representatives – eventually allowed those in charge to grasp the full extent of the environmental and social impact of their mine on the local population.

Thanks to this gradual growth in awareness and in the context of a new management culture Cerrejón established a sustainability department and allowed its activities to be reviewed by an international agency. This review revealed serious shortcomings followed by recommendations which have now been implemented by Cerrejón. One of the most significant results of this verification and years of public pressure is the restitution of the suffering inflicted on the people of Tabaco. Sintracarbón contributed its fair share to this success. Besides, we continue to monitor and attend the negotiation and resettlement process for the villages Tamaquito, Chancleta, Patilla und Roche.

In the recently concluded collective bargaining agreement our union successfully negotiated a vital point for the benefit of these communities: the collective bargaining agreement for 2009 to 2011, signed a month ago, stipulates that the company allows the communities to utilize the the fertile land belonging to the mine for farming. In another tough round of negotiations we

also managed to improve the situation and working conditions of temporary workers. The situation of miners unable to work because of a work-related health condition was also improved; they will now receive more days of sick pay and will no longer be without an income after 180 days.

But these successes have not gone to our head. We do not feel like David who has slain Goliath. Through effective team work and with the support of the international community we managed to make these corporations understand that mine workers – temporary workers included – and the local population deserve to be treated with respect.

Sintracarbón urges the industrialized nations and their corporations to stop the ruthless exploitation of the metal and energy resources in the South and allow the local populations to shape and determine their own development. Based on the nationalization of these resources every country should be given the chance to seek out its own path of development without pressure and exploitation from abroad.

Freddy Lozano and Jairo Quiroz  
Sintracarbón