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Guatemala: Notes On Intimidation Of Labor Leaders

by Deborah Tyroler

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According to a report delivered to the Office of the Attorney General for Human Rights, two leaders of the El Pilar sugar plant union (Retalhuleu department) were attacked by unidentified gunmen. The two men were walking along a highway, when a car equipped with polarized windows attempted to run them over. The car's passengers also fired off several shots at the unarmed workers. The victims said they believed the owners of the sugar mill were responsible for the attack. They said more than 100 workers have recently been laid off in an effort to break the union. On July 1, the chairperson of the Jutiapa Province Agricultural Union was murdered in front of his home by several heavily armed men, according to the Confederation of Trade Unity (CUSG). In late June members of the National Financial Corporation workers' union (SECORFINA) received telephone death threats. The anonymous caller made reference to corpses found on the streets of Guatemala City in recent weeks. Ten union members were fired without legal cause a few days before the telephoned death threats. The company's security team was increased from three to 13. On June 15, the Federation of Guatemalan Workers (CSTG) reported that its leaders were receiving death threats. CSTG headquarters have been broken into twice this year. On June 3, two union members employed by the Central America Glass Company (CAVISA) disappeared shortly after a contingent from the National Police Special Operations Battalion was ordered to remove workers who had been occupying the plant since January. The occupation was staged to pressure company management for an employment security clause in their labor contract. (Basic data from Cerigua Weekly Briefs, 07/16-22/90)

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