



Supporting Teachers in Colombia

“We are proud to stand alongside our Colombian colleagues in their pursuit of a brighter future.”

Joint statement by British and Irish education unions
EIS, INTO, NASUWT, NEU and UCU



Teachers and academic staff face shocking levels of violence in Colombia, particularly when they are active trade unionists.

According to FECODE, the main teacher union, more than 1,000 teacher trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia since the 1980s. Thousands of others have suffered death threats, kidnapping and physical attacks, while many have been forced to flee their homes.

Colombian trade unionists are still being targeted, with teachers among the worst affected. More than 30 teachers were killed from 2018 to 2020.

Education unions have also faced violent smears and stigmatisation from politicians in the president's party, falsely accusing them of indoctrinating and harming children. Yet they continue to stand up for their rights. FECODE, the ASPU academic union and other trade unions have staged several strikes in recent years.

Lack of access to education

- Urban students complete on average 9.4 years of schooling compared with 5.5 years for rural students.
- Only around 40% of children who enroll at primary school go on to graduate from secondary school.
- With online schooling becoming increasingly important, only around half of Colombian children have internet access at home.

From 1980 to 2020, an average of 27 teachers were murdered per year – the equivalent of one every thirteen days.



“Colombian teachers are attacked and stigmatised just for demanding their rights are respected. International solidarity plays an essential role in defending Colombian trade unionists and supporting our struggles for human rights and peace. We know that we can rely on the support of the British and Irish trade unions and Justice for Colombia.”

Nelson Alarcón FECODE National Executive

Trade union solidarity

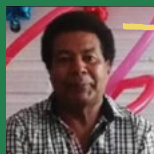
British and Irish education unions are strong supporters of trade unionists in Colombia. Many members of education unions have visited Colombia on JFC delegations. They have passed conference motions in support of Colombian trade unionists. They have lobbied their governments to hold their Colombian counterpart to account. They fund and support JFC's work in defence of trade unionism, human rights and peace.

Why are teacher and academic trade unionists targeted?

- They form part of the most organised trade union sector.
- They speak out in support of improved work conditions.
- They are community leaders in the struggle for peace, human rights and social justice.

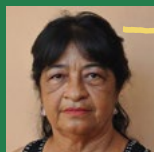
Agreements between education unions and the Colombian government remain unfulfilled. Core demands include:

- Improved health coverage.
- Investment in public education infrastructure.
- Universal access to education across all age groups.
- Guaranteed right to trade union activity.
- An end to human rights violations, including murders of trade unionists and community leaders.
- Implementation of the 2016 peace agreement.



Jairo de Jesús Jiménez **Murdered in Antioquia, 27 April 2020**

As principal of a rural school for primary and secondary students, Jairo had presided over a sharp rise in official rankings. He worked closely with rural communities to protect their rights.



Candelaria Acendra Salcedo **Murdered in Atlántico, 12 May 2020**

67-year-old Candelaria was well-known in her community as a dedicated teacher. The Colombian Trades Union Congress criticised the Colombian government after she was murdered in her home.



Byron Revelo Insuasty **Murdered in Nariño, 22 November 2020**

Byron's body was found in a morgue nine days after he had been abducted while travelling to trade union regional elections. Byron was a member of the SIMANA teacher union in Nariño.

“Support Teachers in Colombia! Support Justice for Colombia!”



Larry Flanagan,
General Secretary



John Boyle,
General Secretary



Patrick Roach,
General Secretary



Kevin Courtney &
Mary Boustead, Joint
General Secretaries



Jo Grady,
General Secretary



What can you do to help?

- Affiliate your branch or as an individual to JFC
- Write to your MP about the situation in Colombia
- Move motions in your trade union to support Colombian activists
- Follow JFC on social media and inform others about Colombia
- Invite JFC to talk at your union events

What does JFC do?

- Highlight the situation for teachers in Colombia
- Mobilise political support in British and Irish Parliaments
- Promote solidarity from the British and Irish trade union movements
- Provide permanent support to teachers on the front line in Colombia

*for Peace
and Social Justice
in Colombia*

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