 Solidarity with Colombian workers

Huber Ballesteros

Letter of thanks, January 2015

 Silver Rose Award nomination for Huber Ballesteros

The TUC-backed Justice for Colombia has nominated jailed Colombian trade unionist Huber Ballesteros, for the Silver Rose Award, given every year to outstanding human rights advocates and defenders by the progressive European-based development NGO Solidar.

The TUC has also nominated Huber, along with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC); global union federations IndustriALL, UNI and PSI and its European organisation EPSU; the Irish Congress of Trade Unions; TUC and ICTU affiliates GMB, Unison, Unite and SIPTU; the European Parliamentary Labour Party and the Northern Ireland SDLP and Co-operative Party, the Trade Union Group of MPs, Lord John Monks and Police Commissioner Tony Lloyd.

In response, JFC has had the following letter of thanks from Huber, in La Picota Prison, Bogota, Colombia.

*Brothers and Sisters, I send you a warm hug.*

*To begin this letter of thanks for such a beautiful gesture of solidarity in nominating me for this prestigious prize, I want to say that I believe that all workers around the world are brothers and sisters, regardless of the distance between us or the language or nationality. As well as being workers, we are a family which feels pain at any injustice committed against any of us in any part of the world.*

*When I began my trade union activity 28 years ago, I did it not only with the conviction that it is the best way to reclaim the rights of workers, but also because I have always believed that it is a duty of each worker to organise and carry forward the working class struggle, as a tool to reach our collective objectives.*

*The situation in my country is not very good, we have a profoundly broken society, with shamefully high levels of economic and social inequality, and where challenging the status quo is punished with death and prison.*

*For me, I have perhaps been lucky by facing prison and not death. From here I continue to contribute my ideas to the trade union movement and political opposition. And I have received so much solidarity and kindness from around the world and in Colombia that every day I am more convinced in my beliefs and in what I have dedicated my life to.*

*My activism in the trade union movement has always been dedicated to advancing the working conditions of our members. I have never sought positions or awards. I have always viewed the positions I have held in the union movement as a responsibility to the members who have elected me. The prize, like this one which I have been so generously nominated for, I feel is a beautiful gesture of solidarity between workers and I thank you immensely.*

*I thank you also because I know that in this nomination you are not just recognising my work, but that of millions of Colombian workers and thousands of trade unionists who have been assassinated, imprisoned and displaced. I also take this nomination as motivation to carry on our struggle like the millions of workers around the world who struggle daily for a fairer economic and political system, one where the value of workers is recognised and their wellbeing is taken into account.*

*Gestures like the ones you have made, give me strength to carry on, to not give up in the face of the difficult situation that I am in, and it makes me more committed to my work and ideas. No matter the sacrifice I must make, I promise not to give up and I will always keep my principles of defending working people at the forefront of my actions.*

*Thank you for your solidarity.*

*From prison and in the name of the Colombian trade union movement, a big hug.*

*HUBERT BALLESTEROS GOMEZ.*

*Trade Union leader*

*Prisoner of the Colombian regime*