

Hilda Solis  
US Secretary of Labor  
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Washington, DC 20210  
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August 14, 2012

Dear Secretary Solis:

We are deeply concerned for the well-being of permanently injured former workers of General Motors' Colmotores factory in Bogotá. For the past year they have maintained a presence outside the US Embassy in Bogotá to draw attention to their cause. Now there are at least seven workers who have sewn their mouths shut in a hunger strike, which began August 1. We urge that you compel General Motors to come to an agreement with them.

Former workers of Colmotores suffer from occupational injuries caused by vicious body postures, repetitive motions, and lifting excessively heavy weights. A short time after their occupational injuries were discovered, GM dismissed them. The injured workers (organized in the association called ASOTRECOL) are only asking what is due to them: compensation, medical coverage, and retraining or reintegration into GM.

It is the duty of the Obama Administration to enforce the Labor Action Plan (part of the US-Colombia Free Trade Agreement), which obliges Colombia to take "major, swift and concrete steps" to improve workers' rights.

When asked why they have gone to the extreme measure of sewing their lips shut, Jorge Parra, President of ASOTRECOL said, "Essentially, GM gave us a choice: to die of hunger [from the strike] or to die waiting for them to solve this problem."

Because of the urgency of this situation, we **strongly urge you** to work with GM to meet the former workers' demands:

- recognize their injuries as occupational,
- assume the costs of the corresponding medical treatment,
- pay pensions or disability to those who are so severely injured that they can no longer work or can only work part-time,
- compensate workers for the economic damage that they have suffered, including lost wages and lost homes.

Thank you for your prompt attention. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Brian J. Stefan Szittai  
Coordinator

cc: Sr. Juan Manuel Santos, President of Colombia ~ via fax 011 571 596 0631  
Rafael Pardo Rueda, Minister of Labor of Colombia ~ via fax: 011 571 596 0631  
Dan Akerson, CEO of General Motors ~ via fax: 313 566 5000  
Gabriel Silva Luján, Colombian Ambassador to the US ~ via fax: 202.232.8643  
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Mary Brett Rogers-Springs, Senior Desk Officer for Colombia, US State Department ~ via fax: 202.647.2628  
José de Jesús Orozco Henríquez, Rapporteur for Colombia, Inter-American Commission on Human Rights ~ via fax: 202.458.3992  
US Senators Brown & Portman and US Representatives Fudge, Gibbs, Johnson, Kaptur, Kucinich, LaTourette, Latta, Renacci, Ryan, Sutton ~ via email

AFL-CIO\_GM workers\_Colombia

**The following people hereby urge you to take action on this matter as indicated in this letter:**