

Produced by the Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES)

# Watch

## Final CAFTA Legislation Sent to Congress, Vote Likely in July *\*Please Respond to attached Alert!*

In May, the cross-border anti-CAFTA movement celebrated the first time that a free trade agreement has languished for over a year after its signing without being ratified in the US Congress. The campaign against CAFTA that CISPES helped to start over 3



The New York City People's Referendum protests against DR-CAFTA in May

years ago has been an overwhelming success; what was billed as an easy deal has turned into a major political battleground. CISPES, the Stop CAFTA Coalition, and other allies have mobilized a broad, grassroots movement in the US, and rallied near unanimous opposition by Democrats in Congress. Regardless of the final tally, we have already won.

But now, the battle has reached its final hour. Despite the apparent lack of votes in the House, the Bush Administration presented the formal implementing legislation for CAFTA on

June 23. Recognizing that to wait any longer would mean the certain demise of CAFTA, the administration is willing to take the risk of losing a floor vote on the bill. Of course, the champions of "free" trade will not go down without a fight. President Bush and his corporate allies have launched an unprecedented lobbying campaign, even making deals to buy votes.

They know that to lose CAFTA would be to lose much more — it could permanently derail negotiations for the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and strike a blow to the WTO.

Still, the desperation efforts have produced few new votes in favor of CAFTA; on the other hand, they have provoked grassroots protests in New York, Los Angeles, Portland, Washington DC, Albuquerque, and Missoula, Montana, among other places. Back in Central America, protests against CAFTA continue, further exposing the

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## Massive March on International Workers' Day in El Salvador

More than 50,000 workers, students, and activists triumphantly commemorated May 1st, International Workers' Day, this year in El Salvador, taking to the streets in the largest May Day march since the 1992 signing of the Peace Accords.

The enthusiasm and massive turnout for the march defied the climate of fear that the government had been working to create in the weeks leading up to the march (see article inside about increased repression). The climate of uncertainty about repression was furthered by reports that police were going to detain buses coming into the city. Finally, on the day before the march, the head of the National Civilian Police (PNC) announced that anyone marching with their face covered — a tradition for students — would be immediately arrested.

Yet on Sunday morning, the gathering point for the march — with samba bands and clowns on stilts wandering through brightly colored blocs of workers — looked more like a festive carnival than a militant protest. As people circulated with whistles, chants, and banners, waiting expectantly for the march to



CISPES PRESENTE, HOY Y SIEMPRE! Hundreds of unions and organizations marched on May 1 in El Salvador

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CAFTA, continued anti-democratic repression practices of pro-CAFTA governments. The Popular Social Bloc (BPS) staged an anti-CAFTA rally in front of the U.S. Embassy in El Salvador in late May until fully-armed riot police broke up the demonstration. Despite police violence and raids targeting organizations fighting CAFTA, groups in Honduras, Guatemala, Costa Rica and Nicaragua also organized large anti-CAFTA protests this spring. FMLN Deputy Salvador Arias has traveled repeatedly to the US, joining other Central American social and political leaders in lobbying and speaking out publicly against CAFTA. The FMLN has also brought a motion to overturn CAFTA's ratification in the Salvadoran Assembly, due to the unconstitutionality of the agreement itself and the process by which it was passed.

Former US Trade Representative Robert Zoellick has said that to not pass CAFTA would be to turn our back on a region of "struggling democracies" that could therefore return to violence and tyranny. Zoellick specifically cited the FMLN and the Sandinistas as opponents to CAFTA who would benefit politically from its rejection, and referred to Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez and FMLN leader Schafik Handal as "enemies of freedom". He also denounced the FMLN's endorsement of ALBA, an alternative to CAFTA and the FTAA put forward by Chavez and Fidel Castro. The existence of ALBA and other alternative programs show that the battle lines have indeed been drawn in Latin America, as more and more political leaders and social movements reject U.S. neoliberal projects like CAFTA. The solidarity between the Stop CAFTA Coalition and mobilizing efforts in Central America is a great example of the power of organizing across borders that will continue regardless of whether CAFTA fails. But, a defeat of CAFTA in a House vote would indeed be a great triumph, and we must make it happen! ■



YOUTH CELEBRATE MAY DAY Students mock the ARENA government's attempts to privatize water

MAYDAY, cont. begin, the boisterous feeder march arrived from the university. Led by the university workers' unions, and undaunted by the police presence, students arrived with their faces and heads covered, setting off loud, explosive noisemakers along the way and painting the city walls.

The main march was led by the public sector union federation FESTRASPE, which included the unions of port workers, electrical distribution workers, doctors and health care workers. Joining them were thousands of other workers, each group carrying banners celebrating international workers day, rejecting CAFTA, calling for a raise in wages, and demanding the government respect all workers' right to organize. Other groups that marched in the workers' bloc included teachers, agricultural workers, cooperative members, sex workers, maquiladora workers, community faith-based groups, and high school students. Leaders of the Popular Social Bloc (BPS) Guadalupe Erazo and Rafael Coto led the chanting with "Long live the working class! Down with gringo imperialism!" Marchers also paid tribute to the origins of International Workers Day, remembered the Chicago workers killed fighting for labor rights in 1886. The CISPES delegation marched alongside the Popular Social Bloc (BPS), as well as a group of organized high school students, carrying a huge banner celebrating 25 years of solidarity with the Salvadoran popular struggle, and rejecting CAFTA.

The BPS has emerged as a voice at the forefront of the campaign to counter increased repression, defending the rights of workers and fighting on behalf of the poor in the face of a renewed economic crisis (see BPS letter inside.) This growing coalition of workers, peasants, students, veterans, religious leaders and indigenous people presented the Salvadoran government with a list of demands, among them: No to DR-CAFTA, more job creation, universal access to potable water without privatization, free public education & health care for all, and increased government sup-

port of agricultural production.

The march's first bloc of unions and social movement organizations took over an hour to pass. Then came the FMLN bloc, led by FMLN war veterans, followed by hundreds of red banners from the party's local base committees. Two hours after the march began, as the front of the march reached San Salvador's Central Plaza, marchers in the FMLN bloc were still setting off from the march's starting point, with estimates that the march extended some 30 blocks.

This year's march was not only marked by its immensity, but also by the large turnout of youth and the energy and humor that they brought to the march. Throughout the march, people were dressed in costumes that spoofed the police, the rightwing television corporation TCS, President Saca, and President Bush. A large group of students carried cardboard pigs painted with the colors of the ruling ARENA party.

The success of the march is an example of how the Saca government's two pronged strategy for curbing popular organizing has failed; the multi-million dollar mega-investment of public funds in pro-government propaganda has done little to distract people from the ever worsening economic crisis, and at the same time the campaign of fear and repression failed to keep people out of the streets on May Day. After the historic turnout this International Workers' Day, the Right in El Salvador understands that the social movement and the FMLN are one step closer to proving true the BPS's motto, "El presente es de lucha, el futuro es nuestro!" or "In the present we struggle, but the future is ours!" ■

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# Repression Continues in El Salvador, With New Involvement by the US Government

On April 28, Ecuadorian Doctor Pedro Banchón, an advisor for the doctor's union SIMETRISSS living in El Salvador with his wife and children, was deported from El Salvador. Banchón was violently seized from the union office by riot police and within hours, put on a plane out of Comalapa Airport. Members of the union joined FMLN deputies at the airport to protest his rapid, unjust deportation, which led to a confrontation in which two legislators were mistreated by the riot police. Three Human Rights officials were also arrested attempting to ensure that Dr. Banchón's rights were respected. Though they were later released, officials from the ruling ARENA party attempted to discharge the current Ombudswoman Beatrice de Carrillo who, despite death threats against her in recent months, has done much to denounce human and labor rights violations in El Salvador.

Such events characterize the increasingly precarious situation for those in opposition to ARENA's policies. The following day, Salvadoran President Tony Saca announced that the deportation came by his own personal order, based on the charges that Banchón's union activism violated the Salvadoran law that prohibits foreigners from being involved in internal politics. Interior Minister Rene Figueroa labeled Banchón a "professional agitator", and referred to his supposed ties with the FMLN. Figueroa and Saca have also made threats against other foreigners involved in progressive politics in El Salvador. Figueroa announced on May 9 that the government has identified certain foreigners and was looking to arrest and deport them. Solidarity representatives in El Salvador have refused to be intimidated by Figueroa's threats, and since then no arrests or deportations have been made.

Meanwhile, as part of the "Super Iron Fist" program, the National Civilian Police (PNC) put forward a new law in May that declares the right of police officers to raid homes without a warrant. Ricardo Menesses, head of the PNC, announced that the "voluntary" raids would only be done if a neighbor reports suspicious behavior. This increase in the powers of the PNC shows a frightening



**ECUADORAN DOCTOR TARGETTED**  
**Deportation leads to Airport Brutality**

resemblance to the 1970s and 80s when an environment of fear permeated El Salvador, and when the *Guardia Nacional* and the death squads – which were dissolved through the Peace Accords – used civilian "orejás" or spies to inform on their neighbors. Interior Minister Figueroa also announced in May that his office is creating what they call a "Salvadoran migra", or migration patrol. This new name for state repression, masked as an effort at immigration control, is part of ARENA's "anti-terrorism" campaign, focusing specifically on narco-trafficking, gangs, and organized crime. However, as always in El Salvador the right-wing blurs the line between terrorism, gang activity, and political protest.

## US Endorsement and Aid for New Tools of Repression

In April, the United States Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) opened a permanent office in El Salvador with the stated objective of advising and training Salvadoran police in their anti-gang work. Part of that training will include things like spying, "intelligence", and teaching Salvadoran officials "skills" like how to illicit information from prisoners. As with the migration patrol and voluntary raids, social movement leaders fear that the real purpose for the FBI training is to help the Right refine its ability to repress those who participate in political activities.

Then, during the June meeting of the Organization of American States (OAS) in Fort Lauderdale, Florida, US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice announced that the United States will create an International Law Enforcement Academy (ILEA) in El Salvador. Some have characterized the efforts to build such a

school in Latin America as a blatant attempt to reintroduce the School of the Americas (SOA) model in the region, thereby expanding the scope of US military control. Officially, the school is said to have an "academic focus", with anti-terrorism and gang-fighting among the main objectives. The first classes are set to start this July 25, with some 1500 students attending.

Given the history of US security training in Latin America, it is no wonder that Salvadorans are afraid that the ILEA would be used to train personnel in repression and torture techniques, much like the SOA was used during the Salvadoran civil war. US Embassy Representative Philip French remarked that the school would not lead to the loss of Salvadoran sovereignty and said that rather it would "give El Salvador privilege, and an image in the region of stability, professionalism, and commitment." The Popular Social Bloc (BPS) disagreed, calling the ILEA a tool designed to "strengthen the dominance of the US government over our country, demonstrated by dollarization, the presence of Salvadoran troops in Iraq... and the implementation of CAFTA." As a result, the BPS has declared itself in permanent campaign to prevent the installation of the ILEA school. ■

## ¡La Solidaridad no Tiene Fronteras, CISPES en la Trincherera!

By María Vides, Nat'l Program Organizer

During CISPES's May Day delegation I had the opportunity to meet with various groups and individuals associated with the Popular Social Bloc for Real Democracy, or BPS. Each of the organizations utilizes different forms of struggle but all maintain an impressive level of resistance, and a strategy for confronting the dehumanizing system of corporate globalization that the US continues to impose on the region of Central America. These groups are an example of the incredible revolutionary spirit that the Salvadoran people share with countless popular movements around the world.

One of the groups we met with was ANTA – the National Association of Agricultural Workers – at a community land occupation. Salvadoran *campesinos* continue to cultivate the land as their ancestors did in the past, but the problem of land scarcity is an eternal one. One solution has been to occupy land, such as was done by families in La Libertad, where some 25 families organized through ANTA now live and work together in cooperation. As they told us, "We are ANTA, and we struggle together against the National Police to prevent them from throwing us off the land.

We live without drinking water, electricity, and bathrooms, and only during certain times of the year are we able to get water from the wells. But we mobilize and manage to get to San Salvador – which isn't easy given that we don't have money for buses – to protest the government, demanding that they give us the title to this land that we believe is ours."



**DELEGATES MEET WITH THE FMLN WOMENS SECRETARIAT**

Another group we met with was the FMLN Women's Secretariat, which is working to organize Salvadoran women from the grassroots so that they take an active role within the party, not just filling quotas and advancing in the political

arena, but also in their revolutionary struggle within the social movement. Poverty takes the face of women in El Salvador; women suffer high levels of cancer-related deaths, lack reproductive health services, and have no access to risk-free abortion. Few women achieve high school education, and in rural areas, women hardly go to school at all. Meanwhile, the Opus Dei sect of the Catholic Church, along with other conservative organizations financed by the US, has pushed through changes in legislation relating to the definition of "life", while protesting against homosexuality through its campaign "Yes to Life". The Women's Secretariat is responding to this by organizing women's health promoters and by educating women in ways that better prepare them to deal with the difficult conditions in El Salvador, even in the sweatshops.

A third group that we met with is the Roque Dalton Front of University Students (FURD), a youth group at the National University (UES) made up of students in various fields, from medicine to political science to economy. They explained how proud they are to study at the UES, the only public university in El Salvador. During the civil war in El Salvador, many intellectuals, revolutionaries, and martyrs came from the National University, and according to one student, "we barely measure up to the knees of the students from that era." But the FURD has done much to show students how President Saca has criminalized youth through his "Super Iron Fist" campaign, such as the way in which the pictures of many of the students we met with were published in the major newspapers in December of 2004, with captions calling them dangerous and violent. The students are also demanding a just national budget, that would include at least 5% for the National University, while insisting that the UES remain autonomous. Many groups told us over the course of the delegation that, "El Salvador is living under a civil dictatorship, and therefore the presence of international solidarity is so significant that it makes the government nervous. You are witnesses to what happens in our country, to what happens to those of us who participate in the social movement." As a Salvadoran woman and as a delegate on the CISPES May Day delegation, I will always recall the chant shouted by the Popular Social Bloc during the May Day march – "Because solidarity has no borders, CISPES is in the struggle!" ■

## The Popular Social Bloc of El Salvador

### Sends An Open Letter to Condoleezza Rice upon her visit to El Salvador

San Salvador, April 28, 2005 (excerpt)  
Dear Condoleezza,

Today you came to our country. We cannot welcome you here. You represent a government that contributed military aid to the genocide of our people during the armed conflict. You represent a government which intervenes in our internal affairs and threatens the lives and employment of compatriots in the US.

Allow us to introduce ourselves: We are a popular coalition representing diverse sectors of our society, including union organizers who live under threat of repression; peasants who are struggling for land hoarded by huge land owners; communities defending their right to dignified housing; students seeking the light of knowledge; indigenous who refuse to be exterminated; war veterans who are lifting the flag of peace; women who reject gender discrimination; and churches who proclaim Jesus' gospel of justice.

We know that the ruler Saca will tell you that this is a province of the empire that has been pacified; that this colony is a land of opportunity, advancing toward modernity. You can think what you want. What we would like to assure you is the following:

We are a people who will fight for our independence and sovereignty. We are a people full of dignity. We are the people of Agustín Farabundo Martí and Monseñor Romero. We are a people in resistance. For the last 16 years, four ARENA party governments have destroyed agricultural production and today, unemployment

reigns. People are coming from the countryside to the city to find themselves on the sidewalks of the informal market. There is much hunger and suffering and injustice. The free trade factories pay starving wages, and our young people are expelled from the country to seek employment. This is the lifestyle imposed by the US government.

### We demand the following from the U.S. government:

1. Respect our self-determination and independence.
  2. Do not extradite the terrorist Posada Carriles to our country.
  3. Guarantee job security the Salvadorans living in the US, and offer amnesty to the productive sector of undocumented immigrants.
  4. Respect the independent thinking of our people by not intervening in our electoral processes with propaganda or money.
  5. Cease the criminal and racist campaign against our compatriots who cross the border from Mexico to the US.
  6. Halt the imposition of DR-CAFTA.
  7. Allow the Salvadoran troops in Iraq to come home.
  8. Close the Comalapa military base that threatens peace for the entire Mesoamerican region.
- Use the military budget instead for education and health care.

**The National Coordination of the Popular Social Bloc in El Salvador**

