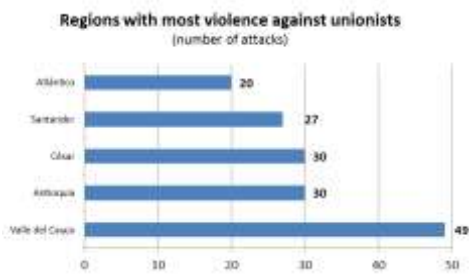


The situation of trade unionists in Colombia

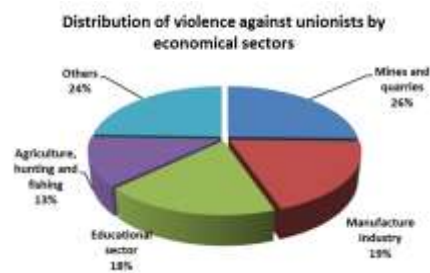
In 2013, the National Labour School (*Escuela Nacional Sindical - ENS*) reported **27 killings of unionized workers**, 13 attempted murders, 149 threats, 28 cases of harassment and 13 cases of arbitrary detention. This represents 5 more cases of killings and 6 more attacks than in 2012. 90% of these violations were committed against union leaders. It is important to highlight the fact that 89.2% of the 18 cases of collective violence were directed against organisations affiliated to the Confederation of Workers' Union (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores - CUT*).



It is noteworthy that in 54% of cases, there is no information about the alleged perpetrator. However, for cases in which the perpetrator is allegedly identified, **72% are attributed to paramilitaries, 19% to state agencies and 6% to the guerrillas**. A smaller percentage is alleged to be common crime cases or perpetrated by employers.

Oidhaco reiterates its concern at risks to trade unionists, which continues to be very worrying. The year 2014 started – on January 4 – with the murder of Luis Marin Rolong of Sinaltracaba. U.S. Congressman Keith Ellison sent a letter to President Santos asking for the murder to be investigated and that those responsible are prosecuted. Also of concern are injuries received on 10 January, by Oscar Arturo Orozco President of the CUT in the Caldas region, and of the Union of Energy Workers of Colombia (*Sindicato de Trabajadores de la Energía de Colombia*), and also a member of the Movice office in Caldas, caused by actions of the police Riot Squad (*Escuadrón Móvil Antidisturbios*) during a peaceful demonstration. There is a long list of actions against the trade unionist since May 2012. Threats continue, as shown by those received in February by Eberto Díaz and Nidia Quintero, national leaders of the Unified Agricultural Trade Union Federation (*Federación Nacional Sindical Unitaria Agropecuaria*).

Only 32% of Colombians have access to decent work. The amount of people working in **the informal economy is not diminishing** (according to ENS, in the 13 metropolitan areas, 51% of employees work in these conditions) and there is **no progress in wages in this sector** (49% of these workers receive less than the minimum wage). While **unemployment fell** and stood in November 2013 at 8.5%, the unemployment rate is still **the highest in Latin America**. It is important to note that the highest growth sectors in the economy contributed very little to employment, or jobs were lost in these sectors. The mining sector, one sector that will benefit from the Free Trade Agreement between the EU and Colombia, grew by 6% (one point higher than the total growth rate) but lost about 13,000 jobs. The sectors creating employment are characterized by high precariousness and informality.



As for **working conditions**, the ENS **reported** high outsourcing of workers, especially in the 22 largest companies in the country, which represents 50.7% of workers. This outsourcing occurs as a result of the search for lower labour costs, and the need for a floating and flexible workforce. Medellín is the city with the highest percentage of outsourced employment (53%), followed by Bogotá (49%).

According to ENS, the country's labour market has undergone major transformations in the workplace, particularly in work flexibility. Its most obvious consequence is the proliferation of **atypical contracts that violate the minimum conditions of work**.