

Open Letter Regarding The Coca-Cola Company's Commitment to Labor Rights

As someone who has devoted my career to labor issues, I share the concerns of student activists regarding labor conditions around the world. Through my work with the United Nations International Labor Organization, I have seen firsthand the manifold difference it makes in the lives of individuals, families, communities and entire countries when employers live up to their responsibilities to workers.

Committed to Fair Labor Practices.

My employer, The Coca-Cola Company, is committed to fair labor practices everywhere we do business. Around the world, Coca-Cola workers are free to exercise their rights to union membership and collective bargaining without pressure or interference. In fact, we are one of the most highly unionized multinational companies in the world, and we keep working to improve our labor relations practices.

Given the state of the world today, many of the countries where we operate are burdened with ongoing conflicts. Concerns have centered on Colombia, where violence against trade unionists and many others has been going on for decades and has deterred most people from joining unions. Even so, more than 30 percent of Coca-Cola workers in Colombia belong to unions, compared to a national average of 4 percent.

Working to Keep Employees Safe.

We share the concerns that many have expressed about the violence in Colombia and we are working to keep our employees safe. Coca-Cola bottlers work with unions and the government to provide emergency cell phones, transportation to and from work, secure housing, and a host of other measures to protect employees. Additional security measures are routinely provided to union leaders and special measures are undertaken when a threat against unionized employees is brought to the attention of the bottler's management.

Committed to Colombia.

We are proud of our 70-year history in Colombia and our contributions to local communities, and we are committed to supporting the country's progress. We invite universities, non-government organizations, as well as our critics, to join in a constructive engagement process to improve the conditions for labor in Colombia.

For The Coca-Cola Company
Edward E. Potter
Director, Global Labor Relations