

Maria Eva Villate, National President of ASDEP

Sister Maria Eva Villate is a lawyer and Human Rights instructor and President of ASDEP, National Public Service Association for the Office for the People's Defender that forms part of the Public Ministry. Maria Eva was a founding member of ASDEP, formed in 1997 to defend the human and labour rights of workers of the Office of the People's Defender and to guarantee respect for their mandate to protect the human rights of citizens and communities...

Over the last 4 years, Maria Eva is the legal advisor to the department responsible for the defense of aboriginal people and ethnic minorities in the country. She has worked closely to defend aboriginal communities in Colombia who have been under attack by paramilitary forces, or who face expulsion from their ancestral lands due to the encroachment of transnational corporations seeking sources of mineral wealth and biodiversity.

Maria Eva is also an expert on the question of the criminalization of social protest as part of the new trends that come with globalization. She has profound insights and experience regarding the link between the anti privatization fights and the persecution of unionists in Colombia. Moreover, Sister Villate has delivered a number of courses on labour and human rights for unions in Colombia.

Mission of ASDEP

As a trade union, ASDEP assumes the defence, promotion, and effective application of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people and its organizations. It seeks to contribute to the establishment of true social justice, liberty, full democracy and peace in our country.

General Strategy of ASDEP

ASDEP aims to develop programs in the areas of human rights promotion, education and training. It is determined to extend its solidarity to other trade union organizations and the social movement in general, providing educational programs and accompaniment in matters of human and labour rights. ASDEP seeks to strengthen the integration of the trade union movement at a regional and continental level, in response to increased globalization.

Defending Public Services: Canadian and Colombian Workers on the Front Lines Tour, May 6 – 21, 2004

Sister Villate participated in a worker to worker exchange "Defending Public Services: Canadian and Colombian Workers on the Front Lines Tour." The Frontlines tour, May 6-21,2004 was jointly sponsored by the PSAC, CUPE,

CUPW and the CLC. The tour consisted of a delegation of five public sector unionists and activists from Colombia who participated in a variety of events in a number of communities, both large and small, in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland and in British Columbia, Alberta and Saskatchewan. Maria Eva Villate traveled out west for the tour

The testimonies, evidence and analysis of Maria Eva Villate and our other Colombian Sisters and Brothers helped us to further understand the devastating impact of the neo-liberal agenda being implemented by the Colombian government - the erosion of the public sector, and the promotion of free trade, privatization and the global corporate agenda, to the detriment of working people.

SJF supports ASDEP's two year educational project

The PSAC Social Justice Fund is currently supporting a two-year project aimed at strengthening ASDEP through on-going capacity building and educational workshops. The intention of the workshops is to strengthen the unity among its members and provide them with more economic and social security. This series of workshops will be taking place in several regions of the country where the Defender's office is operating. The first series of workshops took place in early April, 2006 and encompassed the history of unionism and its impact on socio-economic rights. The workshops also addressed how privatization affects the delivery of essential public services and erodes the labour rights and the working conditions of public service workers.