For Immediate Release
December 10, 2009

Contact: Bama Athreya, bama.athreya@ilrf.org, 202-347-4100 x. 106
Tim Newman, tim.newman@ilrf.org, 202-347-4100 x. 113

Worst Companies for Union Organizing Highlighted for International Human Rights Day

As human rights advocates around the world celebrate International Human Rights Day, the International Labor Rights Forum (ILRF) has released “Working for Scrooge: Worst Companies of 2009 for the Right to Associate” – a list of the four worst multinational corporations for union organizing. Among other rights related to workers, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) states that “everyone has the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests” (Article 23, Section 4). The US-based companies on ILRF’s list use intimidation and even violence to violate workers’ internationally recognized right to organize.

Despite the labor rights protections in the UDHR, UN and ILO declarations and national labor laws, workers continue to see their rights trampled on a daily basis. In fact, in its most recently released survey of violations of trade union rights, the International Trade Union Confederation reports at least 76 unionists were killed globally as a result of their organizing efforts in 2008.

The companies on this year’s list include: Dole (with violations in Cameroon, Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and the Philippines), Kohl’s (with violations in Nicaragua and Turkey), Kraft (with violations in Argentina, China, Honduras and the United Kingdom) and Nestlé (with violations in Colombia, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia and Tunisia).

Bama Athreya, Executive Director of the International Labor Rights Forum, said, “As we celebrate International Human Rights Day and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, consumers and labor rights advocates globally can support the human rights of workers by letting these companies know that they need to respect the right to organize.”

As the global economic crisis spreads, many labor advocates fear that companies are using the crisis as a pretext for cracking down on unionized workers and instituting employment schemes that reduce the number of workers guaranteed union protections. At the same time, workers and their supporters around the world are fighting back – and winning important victories for workers. For example, Russell was named on last year’s “Working For Scrooge” list for shutting down a unionized factory in Honduras, but after Honduran workers organized an international campaign with the support of labor advocates in the US, the union was successful in pressuring Russell to meet its demands leading to a major victory for workers and the global anti-sweatshop movement.

The list of companies is part of ILRF’s Freedom at Work campaign. The list along with company profiles can be viewed online here: http://www.laborrights.org/freedom-at-work/resources/12234

###

The International Labor Rights Forum is a non-profit organization dedicated to achieving just and humane treatment for workers globally. www.LaborRights.org