

## **AFL-CIO Pres. Sweeney Condemns Murder of US Trade Unionist in Mexico** **April 11, 2007**

AFL-CIO President John Sweeney today condemned the murder of Santiago Rafael Cruz, a Mexican employee of the U.S.-based Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), who was found beaten to death on April 9 in the union's office Monterrey, Mexico.

Sweeney called on the Mexican and U.S. governments to ensure that there is a "thorough and professional investigation" of the murder. "The AFL-CIO will vigorously defend the rights of Mexican migrant workers to organize with FLOC, and we will not rest until justice is done in the case of Santiago Rafael Cruz," said Sweeney.

FLOC, an AFL-CIO affiliate, represents Mexican migrant workers who travel from Mexico to North Carolina to work under a U.S. guest worker program. The union's office in Monterrey helps workers who live part of the year in Mexico enforce their rights under a collective agreement that the union signed with North Carolina growers in 2005. The workers won the unique agreement after a ten-year campaign for recognition.

According to FLOC president Baldemar Velasquez, union investigations have uncovered widespread corruption among Mexican labor recruiters who hire for U.S. agribusiness. "We think Santiago's murder was a message to the union to back down," Velasquez said. "But we have no intention of going away. We are going to stay and fight for our rights."

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