

NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD
EMERGENCY RESOLUTION ON PUERTO RICO

WHEREAS due to the colonial relationship between the United States and Puerto Rico, the current economic global crisis has deeply impacted the Puerto Rican people;

WHEREAS Puerto Rico has a chronic unemployment rate between 15% and 17%, close to double the rate in the United States;

WHEREAS the pro-statehood colonial administration of Puerto Rico has implemented draconian economic measures geared towards privatization of the collective assets of the Puerto Rican people and the further impoverishment of the people, as well as a dismantling of local institutions and expressions of the Puerto Rican culture, language and national identity;

WHEREAS, the policies implemented by the current colonial administration of Puerto Rico are also designed to dismantle community organizations, destroy unionization in the public sector, and decimate social movements in favor of the rights of marginalized sectors of society;

WHEREAS, the United States determines all economic, cultural and political policies in Puerto Rico and maintains a consistent, pernicious presence in the implementation of these policies;

WHEREAS, the colonial administration of Puerto Rico has fired some 25,000 workers in the last six months;

WHEREAS, the dismissals of public workers and the privatization efforts have severely diminished the provision of basic services in Puerto Rico;

WHEREAS, hundreds of thousands of Puerto Ricans publicly manifested their repudiation of the neocolonial policies of the colonial administration, including in a national strike on October 15, 2009, which brought virtually all commerce on the island to a halt;

WHEREAS, the Colegio de Abogados, Puerto Rico's Bar Association, in its 160-year history, has consistently defended the interests of marginalized sectors of the society, providing concrete support for those sectors and denouncing government abuse, colonialism, and repression;

WHEREAS, before the October 15th national strike, the Colegio de Abogados denounced the policies of the colonial administration and announced that it would provide legal observers during the strike and related protests and offer legal assistance to persons arrested in connection with denouncing the government policies, or injured by repressive police actions in response to those protests;

WHEREAS, on October 13, 2009, the Legislature of Puerto Rico, hastily and without following standard legislative procedure, passed a bill designed to dismantle the Colegio de Abogados.

WHEREAS, the October 13th legislation was in explicit retaliation for the Colegio's support for social movements on the island, its support of decolonization efforts, and its role in support of the upcoming October 15th national strike;

WHEREAS, the government attack on the Colegio de Abogados is also in retaliation for its decades-long work in favor of decolonization, its anti-military efforts, and its support for the freeing of Puerto Rican political prisoners held for decades in prisons in the United States;

WHEREAS, the mainstream commercial media in the United States has maintained its ongoing virtual blackout about the colonial status of Puerto Rico and news about the repressive economic and political measures on the island and the Puerto Rican people's militant repudiation of these measures.

THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED:

The National Lawyers Guild:

Reiterates its support for all efforts in support of the decolonization of Puerto Rico;

Demands the immediate release of the Puerto Rican political prisoners held in U.S. prisons;

Calls on its membership to engage in educational forums and activities, to expose the colonial relationship between Puerto Rico and the United States, and to denounce the recent repressive economic and political measures;

Expresses its solidarity with the dismissed public workers and their families and for all Puerto Ricans affected by the repressive economic and political measures instituted by the colonial administration;

Expresses its support for the Colegio de Abogados;

Agrees to send a copy of this Resolution to the Governor of Puerto Rico, the Presidents of Puerto Rico's Senate and House of Representatives; the Colegio de Abogados; and the organizations in Puerto Rico participating in the repudiation of the repressive policies; and the President of the United States.

Annual Convention
October 18, 2009
Seattle, Washington

IMPLEMENTATION: Task Force of the Americas; International Committee
Proponent: Task Force on the Americas of the International Committee