



profile

Union Federations: **CUT and Força Sindical**

Country: **Brazil**

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TWO TRADE UNION CENTRES WITH THE SAME OBJECTIVE:

BRAZIL UNITY WINS MAJOR VICTORIES



More than 40 per cent of workers in Brazil are affiliated to one of the two big trade union centres, the CUT and Força Sindical. With their constant struggle and tireless work, they have both won major victories for the country's workers.

On 6 December 2006, 20,000 workers marched in Brasilia and won a historic agreement. Brazil's two largest trade union centres, the Central Unica dos Trabalhadores (CUT) and Força Sindical had organized a third national march in the country's capital Brasilia as part of a two-year campaign for annual increases to the minimum wage.

The march was followed by an increase in the minimum wage, and showed how trade union unity and a fighting spirit can win important gains for the country's workers. The government subsequently

agreed with representatives of the unions, employer organizations and retired workers' and pensioners' organizations to adopt an annual increase of the minimum wage based on inflation and growth in per capita GDP. This policy is still in operation today.

Another milestone in the history of the Brazilian trade union movement took place in 2008. Representatives from both trade union centres attended the Chamber of Representatives for the vote on a bill that for the first time gave legal recognition to the trade union centres.

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The CNTM worked alongside the trade union centres of Brazil for seven or eight years to obtain legal recognition of the trade union centres, which we achieved in 2008. We then formulated a joint agenda for the trade union centres.

The CNTM-Força Sindical and the CNM-CUT both attended demonstrations, seminars and congresses in a policy aimed at unifying the trade union movement, says Miguel Torres, president of the CNTM, an IndustriALL affiliate.



INDUSTRIALL IN BRAZIL

IndustriALL has 22 affiliated unions in Brazil that are affiliated to either the CUT or Força Sindical. It is currently working with its affiliates on training and education projects for young trade unionists, for the inclusion of women in unions and to combat precarious work in multinational companies.

Automotive sector unions in Brazil, Argentina, Germany and Mexico also cooperate and are working together to build trade union networks in Brazilian multinational companies. IndustriALL has a global framework agreement with energy giant Petrobras, that is unique in Latin America.

IndustriALL has a national council in Brazil, on which six confederations of the two trade union centres in three sectors (textiles, metalworking and chemicals) are represented.

And the struggle continues today. The South American giant is currently going through a major economic as well as a political crisis. A downturn in the economy has resulted in plant closures and lost jobs. **However, unions have played a crucial role in defending workers' rights and saving the jobs of thousands of Brazilians.**

At the beginning of 2016, unions affiliated to the CUT and Força Sindical helped organize a successful demonstration and hand-delivered a letter to the Organizing Committee of the 2016 Olympic Games, insisting that Nissan respect the guidelines for official sponsors by respecting human rights in the company's entire supply chain.

Representatives of the CNM-CUT and the CNTM-Força Sindical also attended a public hearing at the Brazilian Senate Human Rights Commission to denounce the company's anti-trade union policy in Mississippi, United States. **As a result, Senator Paulo Paim agreed to contact Nissan CEO, Carlos Ghosn, to ask him to negotiate with the workers and allow the union to organize the plant.**

"We have had support from unions in the chemical sector (FEQUIMFAR - Força Sindical, affiliated to IndustriALL) and from the Osasco and Curitiba metalworkers (Força Sindical) on several issues. For example, the fight to defend democracy, stop the coup and ensure that Dilma's government stays until she has completed her term in office, and in the fight for a new economic policy that promotes economic growth and employment."

The CUT describes itself as "a Brazilian trade union of the masses, working-class, independent and democratic, committed to defending the immediate and historic interests of the working class". It was founded on 28 August 1983, in São Bernardo do Campo, Sao Paulo, two years before the restoration of democracy in Brazil, after 20 years of military dictatorship.

This is why the CUT's first battles were to fight for wide-ranging political, economic and cultural changes able to guarantee the universal rights of workers.

A few years after the CUT was founded, another trade union was created for Brazilian workers. Força Sindical was founded on 8 March 1991, during the International Women's Day celebrations. **It aims to consolidate a modern workers' movement that was "independent, free, pluralist, open to internal and public debate, with a well-defined project for a better, fairer Brazil, more solidarity and able to promote the welfare of its children."**



The unions have organized several demonstrations to stop multinational companies dismissing workers, for example, at Mercedes Benz's plant in Sao Bernardo do Campo (SP), where a strike saved 1,500 jobs. Rafael Marques, representing the ABC Metalworkers Union, affiliated to the CNM-CUT and Miguel Torres, representing the CNTM-Força Sindical both participated in the protest.

Confederations from the two trade union centres have supported each other in other sectors, for example, in the chemicals sector.

Lucineide Varjao, President of the CNQ/CUT, affiliated to IndustriALL, and the first woman to hold this position in the confederation, says:

-  CUT: [@cutnacional](https://twitter.com/cutnacional)
-  Força Sindical: [@CentralSindical](https://twitter.com/CentralSindical)
-  CUT: www.cut.org.br
-  Força Sindical: www.fsindical.org.br

- 1 Third march for the minimum wage, 6 December 2006. *Dino Santos*
- 2 & 4 Demonstration and meeting with representatives of the Organizing Committee of the 2016 Olympic Games. *Fernando Cavalcanti*
- 3 Public hearing at the Brazilian Senate. Senator Paulo Paim, Chair of the Senate Human Rights Commission, agreed to contact the Nissan CEO, Carlos Ghosn, to ask the company to negotiate with the workers. *Fernando Cavalcanti*

The 2nd Congress of IndustriALL Global Union will be held in Rio de Janeiro in October 2016.

