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European Trade Union Confederation [ETUC]
Confédération européenne des syndicats [CES]

Put an end to the violence against the UGTT

The Tunisian authorities have finally agreed to officially recognise and condemn the acts of violence staged at the headquarters of the UGTT trade union centre on 4 December.

After initially attempting to play down the incident, the Tunisian government agreed to reopen negotiations, on 11 December, with the trade union leadership. The talks led to an agreement in which the government pledged to set up a joint commission of enquiry to identify those responsible for the violence being perpetrated against trade unions for over a year and to bring the culprits to justice within the space of no more than 40 days, in exchange for the calling off of the general strike announced for 13 December by the UGTT.

It is not, in fact, the first time that militias acting under the protection of the ruling Ennahdha party have physically assaulted trade unionists, journalists, women, human rights activists and opposition party leaders. Until the latest attack on the UGTT headquarters, these militias have committed their crimes with total impunity. For the European and international trade union movement - several representatives of which have been in Tunisia over recent days to mark their solidarity with the UGTT - it is vital that the Tunisian government respect the pledge it has made to put an end to the violent acts of these militias.

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) consider it unacceptable that armed militias have been allowed to sow terror on the streets of Tunisia without any reaction from the public authorities, without consequential measures being taken against the perpetrators of the violence and without justice being served. The militias' recourse to systematic violence is patently aimed at undermining the process of democratic transition underway in Tunisia since the fall of the dictator in January 2011.

Hence the European and international trade union movement's appeal for maximum international solidarity with the UGTT in its struggle against the violence and attacks against trade union and civil rights and freedoms.

To this end, the ITUC and the ETUC undertake, along with all their affiliates, to alert their respective governments as well as the European and international institutions about the situation in Tunisia and the threat these armed militias represent, not only to trade unions but to the future of democracy in the country.

The European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) speaks with a single voice on behalf of the common interests of workers, at European level. Founded in 1973, it now represents 85 trade union organisations in 36 European countries, plus 10 industry-based federations.

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For more information :

Patricia Grillo.

ETUC Head of Press and Communications

+ 32 (0)2 224 04 30

+ 32 (0)477 770 164

E-mail : Pgrillo@etuc.org

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