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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Justice for Imprisoned Aeroflot Pilots

Brussels, 22 November 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC is requesting Russian President Vladimir Putin to intervene in the case of three Aeroflot pilots who were accused by the company of trying to extort money from it during a dispute over overtime compensation. A Russian court recently ordered Aeroflot to pay more than 1bn Roubles as compensation for overtime and night-work already done by pilots.

According to their union, two of the three pilots were misled into opening an Aeroflot safety deposit box at an airport bank, where they were told by the company to collect documents concerning another case. On opening the box, the pilots saw a sum of money in it and phoned the airline to inform the management of what they had found. They were told the money was compensation for a previously dismissed pilot, but nevertheless left the money in the box and closed it. The bank then informed the pilots that the rent on the box was ending that day and that they should empty it. On doing so, the two pilots were immediately arrested by police who were waiting outside the bank and the third was arrested subsequently. The three pilots are now in prison charged with seeking bribes. Both ITUC Russian affiliates FNPR and KTR have expressed their support for the pilots.

“The behaviour of Aeroflot management in this case is very suspicious, and we are asking Mr Putin to look into it, to guarantee the rights of the pilots under the Russian Constitution and to confront Aeroflot on its long record of anti-union activity. These pilots appear to be the victim of a set-up, and they should be released from prison immediately and a full and open investigation carried out,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

On 14 November, more than 100 members of the union demonstrated in Moscow in support of the pilots. Aeroflot is an official partner of the Sochi 2014 Winter Olympics.

To read the letter to President Putin: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc_letter_to_v_putin_aeroflot_and_sheremetev_cockpit_union.pdf

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