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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Turkey: International trade union movement calls to stop judicial harassment against unionist

Brussels, 13 January 2014 (ITUC OnLine): In January, the ITUC will join the international trade union delegations attending in Turkey the court hearings of two cases targeting members of the Confederation of Public Sector Workers' Unions (KESK), an ITUC and ETUC affiliate. This to once again strongly denounce the Turkish government's anti-union attacks and the abuse of the Turkish legal and judicial system by the authorities aimed at hindering the trade union movement.

In the last several years, hundreds of members and leaders of the KESK-affiliated trade unions have been arrested, detained, prosecuted and tried on several grounds for exercising their rights to freedom of association and of expression as well as to peacefully demonstrate.

"These relentless attacks on trade unionists in Turkey must come to an end," said Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary. "All the union members detained should be released immediately and be able to exercise their legitimate role without being afraid of being arrested or accused of connections with illegal organisations."

Today in Ankara, the first hearing of the case of 502 persons – one of the highest number of defendants ever tried – including the President and General Secretary of KESK and many other KESK members, will be heard. The charges are: causing damage to public properties and using inappropriate violence during a strike and demonstration on 28-29 March 2012 in Ankara. The ITUC pointed out that the police ended the demonstration violently. This demonstration attended by thousands of public employees protesting against the draft law on Public Employees Trade Unions and a draft amendment to the Law on Education.

On 23-24 January, the international delegation will attend the first hearing of a lawsuit against KESK's members and leaders in Istanbul. They are part of the 167 persons arrested on the 19 February 2013 during a police raid carried out in the whole country and denounced by ITUC (see previous online <http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-more-than-100-trade>). As of today, 47 persons are kept in prisons pending trials following that raid including 27 in Istanbul whose case will be heard on the 23-24 January.

While no link between Turkey's trade unions and any illegal organisation has been found, the authorities have left no opportunity untapped to refer to such an alleged link as an excuse for harsh and arbitrary repression.

In a letter (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-trials-against-trade>) sent to Prime Minister Erdogan, the ITUC and the ETUC are urging the Turkish authorities to immediately release all the union members arrested under unproven connections to illegal organisations, to lift all bans on meetings and demonstrations, and to have Turkey abide by its European and international obligations to secure the human and trade union rights and freedoms of its workers.

To show your solidarity, you can take action on <http://act.equaltimes.org/turkeytrials> and tell Turkey to stop judicial harassment against trade unionists

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 325 national affiliates.

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