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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Attack on the General Secretary of the UGTT Tunisia: the ITUC expresses its condemnation and solidarity

Brussels, 17 November 2014 (ITUC OnLine): Following the physical attack on Houcine Abassi, the General Secretary of the Tunisian trade union confederation, the Union générale tunisienne du travail (UGTT), the ITUC condemns this unacceptable violence and once again expresses its full solidarity with the UGTT, the lynchpin of Tunisia's successful transition to democracy.

Houcine Abbassi, who is also president of the Arab Trade Union Confederation (ATUC), was the target of a violent attack on Thursday evening as he was leaving his office by car, in Mohamed Ali square in the centre of Tunis. The car windows were broken as stones were thrown at them by external infiltrators. It was only thanks to the vigilance of the UGTT's security guards that the general secretary managed to escape unharmed.

The UGTT described the attack, which occurred at the end of an emergency meeting at the head office of the Tunis transport workers' union, as « a despicable and contemptible act ». It has handed over evidence of the attack and witness statements to the authorities.

The ITUC has added its voice to the resounding condemnation from all sectors of Tunisian society. As the National Union of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT) said the morning after the attack: "This was an attack on civil society and on his pioneering role in cleaning up the country's political climate."

In this country where the social partners have shown great political courage and maturity throughout the delicate period of democratic transition, the Tunisian employers' organisation the UTICA also expressed its « unconditional solidarity » with Abassi, reiterating its « rejection of all forms of violence, both physical and moral ».

"We call on the Tunisian justice system to bring its full weight to bear against these attackers and put an end to these violent attacks and the unacceptable climate of violence threatening the UGTT. The UGTT, a driving force for stability and for the fight for democracy and social justice in Tunisia and the whole Arab region has the full support of the international trade union movement" said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC.

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 161 countries and territories and has 324 national affiliates.

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