



### **OCCUPIED ARAB TERRITORIES: FROM BAD TO WORSE**

The WCL Confederal Board, assembled in Brussels on 22-26 April, passed a resolution in solidarity with the Palestinian workers and people. In view of the brutal military escalation, the WCL demands '*the immediate and permanent withdrawal of the Israeli armed forces and the restitution of the full sovereignty over the occupied Arab territories to the legitimate authorities*'. The WCL reiterates its '*solidarity with the workers and the people of Palestine and with the Palestine General Federation of Trade Unions, legitimate representative of the interests ... of the workers*'. In conclusion, the WCL demands '*the ILO to intensify its action in the region in order to ensure the full exercise of the rights of the Palestinian workers*'.

The International Labour Organisation, for its part, has not remained inactive. At the 90<sup>th</sup> session of the International Labour Conference, on 3-20 June, ILO Director General Juan Somavia will present a report on the situation of the workers in the occupied Arab territories. This report, based on the findings of an ILO mission in these territories, makes mention of '*the almost complete socio-economic disintegration the conflict has caused in the occupied territories, and of the profound humanitarian crisis affecting the Palestinian families*'. In its conclusions, the ILO '*calls for immediate measures and responses and for a reinforced medium-term technical co-operation programme. The gradual removal of the cordon would ease considerably the terrible situation facing the Palestinian workers and their families. Also measures favouring the resumption of work by the Palestinian workers in Israel would reduce the dreadful rate of unemployment.*'

### **ANNUAL REPORT ON WORKERS' RIGHTS 2002**

Like every year on the occasion of the International Labour Conference in Geneva, the WCL has published its Annual Report on Workers' Rights, entitled '**Work in the Informal Sector: a Chance, a Risk, a Challenge**'.

According to the Report, '*the so-called informal sector provides jobs, resources and means of subsistence to millions of workers – and their families – who, without it, would be deprived of them. This is undeniably a fact to be respected and appreciated, even if these jobs fail to observe the usual rules of the employer-worker relation*'. Thus, the informal economy workers are not protected by any regulation, which leaves them particularly vulnerable to all kinds of abuses.

The workers in this sector are either self-employed or part of a – in some cases family – micro company. This makes it particularly difficult for trade unions to do their job. Incidentally, solidarity systems do exist in this sector. That is why the WCL and its affiliates are in favour of structuring the informal sector workers in a way that takes account of the specific features of this sector, without wanting to introduce at any cost the model in place for the classic wage earners: '*Rather than creating something new, it is no doubt in the first place a matter of amplifying what exists already and is in many cases of a "micro" nature, while tackling the overall mechanisms that drive so many people to so-called informal jobs*'.

The Report is available in English, French and Spanish.

### **THE ASIAN TRANSPORT FEDERATION IS BORN**

The newborn Asian Transport Federation (ATF) held its Constitutive Congress in Bangkok, Thailand, on 16-18 May. Mrs Zachria Subagyo of the SPSI, Indonesia, was elected President, Mr Ashoke Bhattacharjee of the ICL, India, Vice President and Mr Mukkadam Hossein of the BSSF, Bangladesh, Secretary General.

Willy Thys, WCL Secretary General, Michel Bovy, FIOST President and WCL Vice President in charge of Trade Action, and Jaap van de Kamp, FIOST Secretary General, were present in Bangkok in support of this new Asian federation.

### **CLAT DELEGATION MET PRESIDENT CHAVEZ**

A delegation of the *Central Latinoamericana de Trabajadores* (CLAT) has paid a visit to the Venezuelan President, Mr Hugo Rafael Chavez, who reiterated that he condemned and rejected every attempted military insurrection against the Constitution and the democratic institutions of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. The CLAT delegation demanded the legal recognition of workers' organisations, reminding that their legitimacy stems from the workers themselves. The government must set up a tripartite dialogue: genuine democracy is indeed the fruit of a political and social dialogue to deliberate on the serious problems requiring a solution, particularly the creation of dignified and productive jobs, an integral social security marked by solidarity, an equitable distribution of wealth and the real implementation of the international conventions and agreements. The CLAT is always concerned by the Venezuelan situation, which is characterised by grow-

#### **TELE-FLASH**

is a two-weekly information bulletin containing brief trade union messages, edited by the information department of the WCL.

Responsible editor :  
Willy Thys  
Information officer :  
Mathieu Debroux.

Reproduction authorised under acknowledgement of source

#### **WCL**

Trierstraat 33  
B-1040 Brussels  
Tel : 02/285.47.00  
Fax : 02/230.87.22  
E-mail:  
info@cmt-wcl.org  
Internet:  
www.cmt-wcl.org

ing polarisation and the absence of an – indispensable – national consultation and dialogue.

before the court and to punish them according to the law.

**HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS  
UPDATE**

The Human Rights Commission of the CGTG from Guatemala has informed us of the assassination, on 13 May, of brother Alberto Benjamin Ramirez Chavez, son of the Secretary General of the FENASEP (national federation of civil servants) and Executive Secretary of the CGTG. This crime brings to the fore the situation of insecurity and violence that prevails in Guatemala. The WCL has sent the President of the Republic a letter of protest, demanding an investigation to bring the authors if this assassination

**Schedule of Activities**

03-20 June:International Labour Conference, Geneva, Switzerland  
14 June:Meeting of the advisory trade union group in preparation for the World Economic Forum, Geneva, Switzerland  
17 June:G8, Ottawa, Canada  
17 June – 05 July:Seminar on The Social Dialogue System in Transnational Companies, IIWE, Ter Nood, Belgium  
21 June:284<sup>th</sup> session of the ILO Governing Body, Geneva, Switzerland