

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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New ICFTU report submitted to the WTO:

Violation of core labour standards in Jamaica

BRUSSELS, 17 January 2005, ICFTU Online: The Caribbean country of Jamaica came under the spotlight today when the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) released a report on the country's respect for core labour standards. The publication of the new ICFTU report is timed to coincide with the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) review of Jamaican trade policy. Pointing to shortcomings in the application and enforcement of core labour standards, the report draws attention to problems with trade union rights, equality and child labour in Jamaica.

The report highlights restrictions on the right to collective bargaining and the right to strike which contravene fundamental International Labour Organisation (ILO) Conventions. Workers in essential services do not have the right to strike. Although the right to organise is well established in law and respected to a large extent, there are clear exceptions to this in export processing zones (EPZs) in Montego Bay, Kingston Free Zone and Garmex, where no trade unions have been formed due to hostility towards the labour movement.

Child labour remains a serious problem in Jamaica, and a national survey has shown that some 3.6% of children aged between 5 and 17 are involved in some sort of economic activity. Child prostitution and the high number of street children are particular areas which call for intensified government action.

The report notes that women are over-represented in low-paying, low-status and low-productivity sectors, and that relatively few women are employed in more highly skilled jobs. Wage differences between men and women continue to exist and are very pronounced at the top end of the labour market.

To read the full report:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221130&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 148 million workers in 231 affiliated organisations in 150 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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