

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Violations of core labour standards in Qatar

Brussels, 21 February 2005, (ICFTU Online): Core labour standards in Qatar is the subject of a new ICFTU report, published as the World Trade Organisation (WTO) reviews the country's trade policy on 21 and 23 February. The report highlights serious shortcomings in the application and enforcement of core labour standards in all four areas: trade union rights, discrimination, child labour and forced labour.

The ICFTU report notes severe restrictions on trade union rights in Qatar. Trade unions are prohibited, collective bargaining is forbidden and wages are set unilaterally. Furthermore, the right to strike is limited and strikes mostly occur over non-payment of wages. Although some progress has been made with the adoption of a new labour code, this code will need revision to bring provisions in line with International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions.

A decree was issued last year, which would enable the creation of a federation of Qatari workers, but no such a federation exists as yet.

Discrimination in employment is also a problem in the Middle Eastern country. The Qatari labour market is characterised by occupational segregation, with most women concentrated in health and education, and a low female participation rate. In the private sector, women are virtually absent at managerial and senior level. Another characteristic of the labour market is the high number of migrant workers, which makes up three quarters of the workforce. Migrant workers are treated differently to national workers. They work longer hours, have fewer holidays, no overtime pay, often face the late payment of wages or no salary at all and without any effective way to file complaints.

To read the full report, go to
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221289&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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