

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Nepal - 3 trade union leaders released, another 5 arrested

Brussels, 1 March 2005 (ICFTU Online): Pressure on the Nepalese government to release jailed trade unionists remains a top priority for the international trade union movement, said the ICFTU today. The detention of 5 trade union leaders, all activists for the ICFTU-affiliated Nepal Trade Union Congress (NTUC), has prompted widespread calls for their immediate release.

According to ICFTU information, Bhakta B. Karki, Deepak Tamang, Ms. Sarita Boon, Ms. Gita Pathak and Chandra Bhattari are today all under arrest. International condemnation of the arrests has resulted in the release of Ms. Manju Bhattarai - NTUC Central Committee Member, Kishore Gautam - a former NTUC District President and Bishnu Nisthuri - General Secretary of the Federation of Nepalese Journalists (FNJ).

In a week that has seen a departure from the King's own decrees stating that trade union meetings are only permitted inside union offices, the ICFTU said that it would continue to press the Nepalese authorities for the safety of trade unionists and for the country's labour movement to operate freely. On 18 February, police entered GEFONT offices, forcing everyone to leave the building including those holding a union raffle, locked the doors and left the premises with the key, only returning it to the union organisation later that evening. Furthermore, the government has allegedly sent a circular to the country's security agencies, ordering them to prevent some 200 trade union leaders, human rights activists and political leaders from leaving the capital of Kathmandu.

NTUC President Laxman Bahadur Basnet is expected to attend a meeting at the Governing Body of the UN's International Labour Organisation (ILO), due to take place in Geneva later this month.

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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