

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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ICFTU calls on IMF and World Bank to suspend lending to Nepal

Brussels, 18 March 2005 (ICFTU Online): Ahead of the trade union movement's international Day of Action on Nepal (22nd March 2005), the ICFTU is calling on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank to suspend lending to the Asian country until human rights, including trade union rights, are properly restored.

Since the royal coup on 1st February, trade union rights and civil liberties have been suspended. Several labour activists now in hiding for fear of persecution, at least 25 trade unionists have been arrested and the names of many more appear on a list of 1400 people who are to be closely observed and who run the risk of detention. Furthermore King Gyanendra has passed a decree banning union meetings of more than 5 people.

The current suspension of human rights "will not contribute to solving Nepal's problems and meeting the very important challenges it faces to achieve economic and social development" said the ICFTU in its correspondence with the President (*) and Managing Director (**) of the World Bank and IMF respectively. "The present situation puts into question the progress in strengthening social dialogue that has taken place in Nepal in recent years," continued the international trade union body.

Highlighting the World Bank's own concerns about the Nepalese government's ability to implement reforms, especially in the absence of mechanisms to build broad-based consensus, the ICFTU underlined that the suspension of assistance would confirm the institutions' commitment to the rule of law, good governance and respect for core labour standards.

The international trade union movement's day of action aims to put further pressure on the Nepalese King to restore trade union rights and put the country on the path to democracy. The ICFTU, together with the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), their regional organisations for Asia - ICFTU-APRO and BATU, and Global Unions Federations are calling for their member organisations to protest at Nepalese diplomatic missions across the world, to make clear to their own governments that the King's actions constitute a flagrant violation of fundamental rights, and to demand an immediate end to the repressive measures put in place since February 1 and the restoration of freedom of association.

* Letter to World Bank President James Wolfensohn:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221413&Language=EN>

** Letter to IMF Managing Director Rodrigo de Rato:
<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221414&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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