

ICFTU OnLine...

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Trade unionists across the world voice protest on International Day of Action on Nepal

Brussels, 22nd March 2005 (ICFTU Online): The continued absence of democracy and human rights, including trade union rights, in Nepal today provoked strong protest from the trade union movement. To mark today's International Day of Action on Nepal, the ICFTU, the World Confederation of Labour (WCL), their affiliates, and Global Union Federations met with Nepalese Ambassadors in country capitals, demonstrated outside the South Asian country's diplomatic mission in India and sent protest letters to representatives of the Nepalese authorities across the world. United in message, the trade union movement delivered the statement that the King must restore democracy and human rights, and the respect for trade union rights.

In the 49 days since the royal dismissal of government (1st February 2005), the Nepalese trade union movement has been the victim of a stiff crackdown by authorities on any expression of human rights. Several trade unionists have been arrested, some of the detained are in poor health, and other labour activists have been forced into hiding, for fear of arrest.

Speaking to the Nepalese Ambassador at a meeting today in Brussels, ICFTU General Secretary Guy Ryder said "the Nepalese authorities must restore democracy, trade union rights and release unfairly detained trade unionists. There can be no justification for the removal of trade union freedoms".

"It is in this repressive and undemocratic climate that we are calling on the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank to suspend their lending to Nepal. We do not believe that the current situation allows for the funds to be used in the way that they were intended", said Ryder at the meeting in Brussels attended by Willy Thys, General Secretary of the WCL, Belgian trade unions including the FGTB, CGSLB and CSC, and the ICFTU's Global Unions' partners - the ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions) and Education International (EI).

Many of the ICFTU's Global Union's partners - Public Services International (PSI), the International Metalworkers Federation (IMF), the International Federation of Building and Wood Workers (IFBWW), the International Union of Food workers (IUF) and Union Network International (UNI) - joined the international trade union body for a simultaneous meeting held at the Nepalese diplomatic mission in Geneva. Whilst the international trade union movement met with Nepalese Ambassadors in the Belgian and Swiss capitals, the Nepalese embassy in London refused to meet with the Trade Union Congress (TUC).

The Nepalese representation in New Delhi was a focal point of protest as hundreds of members of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC) gathered outside to protest against the repressive measures introduced by the King since 1st February 2005.

The ICFTU affiliates, including those in Brazil, Canada, France, Italy, India, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States, and the ICFTU's regional organisations, wrote to Nepalese diplomatic missions in their countries to voice their opposition to the royal assumption of power and its consequences.

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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