

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine...

020/310106

A new ICFTU report on core labour standards in Israel is being issued today to coincide with Israel's trade policy review at the WTO this week.

Brussels, 31 January 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): The report denounces a bill proposed in the last Knesset by the Finance Minister Netanyahu and by Industry and Labour Minister Olmert that would drastically limit the right to strike. Although the bill did not yet become law, it was approved by a ministerial legislative committee in 2004. According to the terms of the bill, workers would no longer be allowed to protest against government policy. Moreover the bill would further restrict the right to strike in public services. In addition to the current lack of definition of the notion of essential services in Israeli legislation, which already gives the authorities wide powers of discretion, this bill would introduce major obstacles to strikes in the public sector by requiring a majority of the union's members to approve the action by secret ballot. The adoption of this bill would clearly undermine the commitment Israel made when ratifying the eight ILO core Conventions.

The report further highlights a considerable level of discrimination among workers despite well-developed legislation in this area. Women make up more than the half of the bottom echelon of wage earners and their hourly wage accounts for about 81% of the hourly wage of their male counterparts. Likewise the report finds that the pay gap between the different ethnic minorities of the country has widened over the last decade. Today the average monthly income of Ashkenazi workers is almost twice as high as that of Arab workers. The report also notes that non-resident workers from the West Bank and Gaza face serious problems of discrimination including lack of access to entitlements, and employment insecurity.

Finally the report expresses concern about the growing number of foreign workers brought into Israel who end up working illegally. Their lack of status makes them particularly vulnerable and some are reported to be held in conditions amounting to involuntary servitude by unscrupulous employers.

Link to the full report:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991223365&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 155 million workers in 236 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories. ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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