

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

## ICFTU Online

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Brussels, 20 February 2006 (ICFTU online): The trade union movement in Guinea-Bissau is having a tough time. The unions are apparently being subjected to systematic harassment. The ICFTU was concerned to learn of the repressive measures by the management of the national Water and Electricity Company (Electricidades e Águas, EAGB) against the leaders of the local trade union at the company.

According to the União Nacional dos Trabalhadores da Guiné (UNTG), the ICFTU's affiliated organisation of which the EAGB is a member, the company's management suspended all the leaders of the local union following a legal strike called by the UNTG from 7 to 9 February. A statement by the UNTG to the Attorney-General, Dr. Octavio Alves, stresses the illegal and arbitrary nature of that decision. The trade unionists who were suspended enjoyed protection against any repressive measures opposing their right to strike based on laws 8 and 9 of 3 October 1991. In addition, the free exercise of the right to strike is guaranteed under the provisions in Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organisation, of which Guinea-Bissau is a member.

Marinho da Silva Joaquim, Diocliciano Monteiro Semedo, Maria Dupret Ledo Pontes, Firmino Judeu, José Carlos Batista, Carlos Caremi and Luis Té, the suspended trade unionists who are represented by their union, had informed the management of their intention to go on strike, so that a minimum service could be arranged with the management. That information was passed on to the authorities in the person of the Energy Minister.

These events seem to confirm that the trade unions of Guinea-Bissau are undergoing a sustained process of harassment. The UNTG maintains that the attacks on freedom of association have increased in recent months. In a letter sent to the government (<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/CISLauPrésidentdeGuiné-Bissau17-02-2006FINAL.pdf>) the ICFTU asked President João Bernardo Vieira to take urgent steps to overturn these discriminatory measures by the management of EAGB against the union committee. The international trade union organisation is also calling for the government to make a public statement to the effect that no further attacks on the fundamental rights of workers will be tolerated. The ICFTU will continue to monitor the case closely and is ready, should trade union rights violations continue in Guinea-Bissau, to contact the competent monitoring bodies of the ILO.

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

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