

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Statement on Controversy over Publication of Cartoons Depicting the Prophet Mohammed

Brussels, 20 February 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): The publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed, initially in a Danish newspaper, has caused deep offence to many Muslim people around the world. Freedom of the press is a principle of fundamental importance. It should be respected in full, and be exercised with responsibility and sensitivity. The ICFTU fully supports the statement made in Doha in February by the General Secretary of the International Federation of Journalists, Aidan White, that while different points of view must be respected in relation to press freedom, fundamental principles must not be compromised.

The current controversy is being exploited by some in order to create and exacerbate division, at the expense of tolerance and mutual respect. The ICFTU denounces the deliberate acts of provocation which have sustained and deepened the controversy, and condemns the killings and other acts of violence which have taken place as a result.

The ICFTU welcomes the joint statement by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan, the Organisation of the Islamic Conference and the European Union on the repercussions of the publication of caricatures of the Prophet Mohammed and the violent acts which have occurred in reaction to them.

The joint statement, which recognises the right of freedom of speech and the need for responsibility and discretion in the exercise of this right, condemns the violent attacks which have taken place in reaction to the publication, and calls for restraint and calm.

The ICFTU fully endorses these sentiments, and in line with the policy adopted at its 18th World Congress (Miyazaki, December 2004), welcomes and supports the vital work being done around the world to improve tolerance and understanding between nations and cultures. Trade unions are at the forefront of these efforts, through their work with their own members, in the community, and through their international contacts and cooperation activities.

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>

For more information, please contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0232 or +32 476 621 018.

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