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Djibouti: Trade union leaders arrested

Brussels, 21 February 2006 (ICFTU online): Two Djiboutian trade union leaders have been arrested by the country's security services. These imprisonments come on top of a long list of trade union violations in Djibouti. Next week the ICFTU will be publishing a report on the observance of international labour standards in the country.

Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed, the Legal Affairs Officer of the Union of Port Workers which is a member of an ICFTU affiliate, the Union Djiboutienne du Travail (UDT), and Djibril Ismael Egueh, the General Secretary of MTS, which is also an ICFTU affiliate, were arrested on 20 February. They were both on their way back from a training session on rural cooperatives organised and delivered by the International Institute of Histadrut, the ICFTU's affiliate in Israel.

The arrest of these two union leaders follows on from the harassment of the UDT International Secretary, Hassan Cher Hared, precisely for accepting the invitation from the Israeli trade union and sending these colleagues to Israel. The national intelligence agency interrogated him for about three hours on 22 January 2006.

The list of trade union rights violations in Djibouti is constantly increasing. In addition to the arrests by the security services on 20 February, there is the harassment of the UDT leaders, the interception by the intelligence agency at the national post office of a complaint sent by the UDT to the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and its replacement by a forged document, the death of several workers during the repression of strikes and other public protests in the course of 2005, and the recent sentencing of several trade unionists from the Port of Djibouti in very unclear circumstances.

Those violations are listed in the ICFTU's report on the observance of international labour standards in Djibouti. The report will be published next week in conjunction with the examination of the country's trade policy by the World Trade Organisation.

In a letter sent to the country's authorities (<http://www.icftu.org/www/PDF/DjiboutiProtestationCISLcontrearrestation.pdf>), the ICFTU calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Mohamed Ahmed Mohamed and Djibril Ismael Egueh and the speedy ending of all harassment and repression of the Djiboutian trade union movement. The international trade union organisation will continue to monitor this case closely and is ready, should trade union rights violations persist in Djibouti, 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 <http://www.icftu.org>. The ICFTU is also a member of Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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