International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU)
International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH)

ICFTU online
058 /040406

Djibouti: What are the authorities hiding?

The Djibouti authorities have arrested and expelled an ILO
representative tasked with investigating the trade union situation in
that country and are refusing entry to a joint FIDH/ICFTU mission to
Djibouti.

Brussels, Paris, 5 April 2006 - The FIDH and ICFTU have condemned the
arrest and today's expulsion of a representative of the International
Labour Office (ILO) by the Djibouti authorities.
Mr Ibrahim Mayaki, an ILO official and holder of a diplomatic passport,
had been on an official visit to Djibouti since Saturday, 1 April 2006.
His brief was to meet with human rights defenders, including trade
unionists, pursuant to complaints reported to his organisation about
violations of trade union rights and legal harassment targeting several
trade unionists in the Djibouti courts. To this end, he met with
representatives of civil society, trade unionists and representatives of
the national authorities, specifically the minister for justice.

According to information received by the Djibouti Human Rights League
(an FIDH member organisation) and by the Djibouti Labour Union (an ICFTU
affiliate), Mr Mayaki was arrested at his hotel on Monday morning at
8.30 by two members of the National Police General Intelligence Service,
who had no special warrant to do so. He was interrogated by the security
forces for more than three hours at the General Intelligence Directorate
about his activities in Djibouti. Before being released, the Djibouti
authorities forced him to sign an expulsion order, effective today.

The FIDH and ICFTU stress that the expulsion comes in the wake of the
refusal by the security forces to let two FIDH/ICFTU investigators enter
Djibouti territory on Saturday 1 April 2006, despite a verbal agreement
by the minister for the interior that there would be no obstacles to
their application for a visa at Djibouti airport. They were jostled,
insulted and forcefully returned to the airplane that brought them to
Djibouti. The investigators submitted a new visa application at the
Djibouti embassy in Ethiopia, so far to no effect.

These events demonstrate the reality of repeated violations of the
rights of human rights defenders in Djibouti and portend an increasingly
repressive approach by the Djibouti authorities to trade unionists and
human rights defenders. The attitude of the Djibouti authorities
confirms the fears of the FIDH and ICFTU about the highly political
nature of the current trial against four trade union leaders who are
being prosecuted for "secret contacts with a foreign power" .

The trial is only the latest episode in the campaign of harassment
against Djibouti trade unionists, as condemned in the annual reports

issued by the ICFTU and the Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders for many years now .

The FIDH and ICFTU condemn the attitude of the Djibouti authorities towards the ILO representative and its investigators and request that the government and legal authorities stringently apply international human rights instruments, specifically International Labour Organisation Conventions No 87 and No 98 as well as the provisions of the United Nations Declaration on the Protection of Human Rights Defenders (1998).

The FIDH and ICFTU call on the Djibouti authorities to authorise free access to the country's territory for human rights NGOs and INGOs. They will continue to inform the international and regional organisations of the human rights situation in Djibouti.

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

For more information, contact the ICFTU Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.