

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

ICFTU OnLine

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Djibouti - arrests of trade union officials

Brussels, 5 April 2006 (ICFTU OnLine): One day after issuing a joint statement with the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH, Paris) strongly condemning the forced expulsion on Saturday 1 April of a joint ICFTU-FIDH mission from Djibouti followed by the arrest on 3 April and expulsion on 4 April of a diplomat from the International Labour Organisation (ILO - specialist United Nations Agency), the International Confederation of Trade Unions today criticised the Djibouti government for the arrest yesterday, 4 April, of the General Secretary of the Djibouti Labour Union (UDT), an ICFTU affiliate.

UDT leader Adan Abdou was arrested at his home by the national police, who did not have an appropriate warrant, on Tuesday, 4 April at 3.30 p.m. and taken to the central prison in Gabode. His arrest occurred immediately after the expulsion of International Labour Office (ILO) representative Ibrahim Mayaki, the only member of the international mission who had been allowed to enter Djibouti and who had presented the case of detained trade unionists to the Justice Minister.

Adan Abdou and Hassan Cher, UDT International Relations Secretary, were released provisionally on Wednesday, 29 March after having been detained for 19 days. The police are actively searching for Hassan Cher and have yet to find him again. The Justice Minister personally gave the order for the two men to be rearrested the day after they were released provisionally by the Djibouti Court.

Two other UDT officials, Djibril Ismaël Igueh and Mohamed Ahmed have been languishing in prison since their arrests on 5 March 2006, the day after they returned from Israel where they had been attending a training course run by the powerful Histtradut trade union federation, an ICFTU affiliate. The four trade unionists have been accused of engaging in "secret contacts with a foreign power" and perpetrating an "affront to the President of the Republic."

All four are due to appear before the Chamber of Indictments at the Djibouti Court tomorrow Thursday, 6 April. Their lawyer, Mr Tarek, a member of the Djibouti bar, intends to ask the court to release the men provisionally and to annul the proceedings due to a lack of legal and medical assistance which contravenes the code of criminal law. None of the individuals arrested were given a medical examination or given the opportunity to meet with their lawyers.

Following these events, the ICFTU wrote to ILO Director General Juan Somavia today to ask him to contact the highest authorities in the Republic of Djibouti and call for the immediate release of all trade unionists currently being detained.

The ICFTU also announced today that it would raise the matter not only with regular ILO monitoring bodies, but also with various international and regional bodies such as the African Union and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). Djibouti is due to take over the next presidency of COMESA and has also proposed itself as a candidate location for the organisation's headquarters. Diplomatic sources say that the ICFTU's damning report published in February 2006 on core labour standards in Djibouti was not well received by President Ismail Omar Guelleh's government. The report coincided with the World Trade Organisation (WTO) General Council's trade policy review of Djibouti.

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

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