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New ITUC report: Public workers' rights denied in Japan

Brussels, 31 January 2007 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC released a new report (http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/TRP_Japan_25-01-07_final.pdf) today on core labour standards in Japan. The report coincides with Japan's trade policy review at the WTO and reveals shortcomings in the application and enforcement of core labour standards, especially with regard to restrictions of trade union rights in the public sector. It finds also that Japan has not ratified two key ILO core labour standards, namely those on discrimination and on the abolition of forced labour.

The set of labour laws applying to public sector workers establishes restrictions with regard to organizing, collective bargaining and the right to strike. All public employees are banned from striking. Trade union leaders who incite strike action in the public sector can be dismissed and fined or imprisoned for up to three years. The government of Japan continues to ignore the recommendations of the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association to amend its legislation to bring it into compliance with its obligations under ILO Convention 87. Despite the fact that a Special Examination Committee on Public Work, Civil Service Workers and Industrial Relations was established recently, it is uncertain whether the discussions therein will result in an acceptance of the recommendations by the ILO and the granting of fundamental labour rights to public sector workers.

The report further notes the existence of open discrimination against women in wages and employment, due largely to the existence of a two-track personnel administration system. The average hourly wage for women is only 65.9 percent of the hourly wage for men.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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