

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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## ITUC Mission to Conakry Supporting Guinean Trade Unions

Brussels 5 February 2007 (ITUC OnLine): An international trade union delegation to the Republic of Guinea, including senior African trade union representatives and led by ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder, has returned from an urgent mission to the Republic of Guinea, where more than 90 people were killed by security forces of the ailing President Lansana Conte during January's general strike. The peaceful strike was called by the ITUC's affiliates in the West African country in protest at the government's unwillingness to tackle rampant corruption and severe deterioration in the country's economy. President Conte's personal intervention to secure the release from prison of high-profile personalities accused of corruption, his failure to implement agreements previously made with the unions, and his refusal to appoint a Prime Minister were key factors in the decision to launch the strike (see <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article624>).

The ITUC delegation visited the trade union building ("Bourse du Travail"), which had been ransacked by government troops whose attempt to kill USTG General Secretary Ibrahima Fofana was thwarted by the intervention of CNTG General Secretary Rabiadou Sérah Diallo. Rabiadou acted as a human shield to protect her union counterpart from the soldiers, however both union leaders received serious injuries from beatings by the military. The international union group also provided initial solidarity funding for victims of the violence and their families. Many of the more than 300 wounded are being treated at the main hospital in Conakry, where medical supplies are running short. Johanna Walgrave, an Executive Director of the International Labour Organisation, accompanied the ITUC mission.

"With our Guinean trade union colleagues, we visited a range of government officials, and held talks with public figures, employer representatives and religious and community leaders, to support the unions' call for democracy, an end to corruption and full respect of human and trade union rights" said Ryder. "With the signing of an agreement on 27 January the national unions have suspended the strike, however we have made it crystal clear to the government that the agreement must be implemented in full," he added.

The agreement includes the designation of a consensus government headed by a Prime Minister, respect for the Constitutional separation of powers, reduction of prices for essential goods, and a series of key measures to secure incomes and living standards, limit spiralling prices of essential goods and promote education and employment. A Commission of Inquiry to investigate the atrocities and bring those responsible to justice, is to be established under the terms of the agreement.

Wounded people at the hospital told the delegation how they had been fired upon indiscriminately by troops, including in their homes. Other witnesses told the ITUC mission of strikers falling to their knees to show their peaceful intent during the military attacks, only to be shot in cold blood by Conte's soldiers.

"We are keeping a very close watch on developments, and will not hesitate to call for strong action by African, European Union and other governments if the regime does not follow through with commitments made to our Guinean trade union colleagues", said Ryder.

The ITUC is also coordinating practical assistance to the Guinean trade unions, to help the families of victims of the government's violence, and to assist in rebuilding the trade union infrastructure. Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates.

Website: [www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org)

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