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Cambodia: Another Trade Union Leader Murdered

Brussels, 26 February (ITUC OnLine) : The ITUC has called today on the Cambodian authorities to open a proper investigation into the murder of Hy Vuthy, 36, a leader of the Free Trade Union of the Workers of Cambodia (FTUWKC) who was shot to death on February 24. This latest murder follows a series of attacks on trade unionists in the country, which has a reputation for severe violations of trade union rights.

The FTUWKC received information that Hy Vuthy was killed shortly after successfully negotiating with a company for a one-day holiday on the occasion of the Khmer New Year.

According to reports, he was shot three times by two unidentified assailants on a motorbike as he drove home on Saturday morning. His family was also subjected to an attack by persons throwing rocks at their home. Vuthy's case is the third murder of an FTUWKC representative since the murder in 2004 of Chea Vichea, former president of the FTUWKC. In that case, the credibility of Cambodian justice system has been seriously compromised by the holding of two innocent persons in prison. The two were condemned on 1 August 2005 by a Phnom Penh court to 20 years imprisonment on the basis of "confessions" obtained by force. No genuine piece of evidence was presented at the trial linking the two men to the murder (see previous online on <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article675>).

In a letter to the ITUC today, the European Commissioner for External Relations and Neighbourhood Policy explained that the European Commission shares the ITUC's concerns over the murder of Chea Vichea and the overall situation for the trade union movement and the Cambodian justice system.

"Once again, a Cambodian trade unionist has been murdered as a result of his work defending the rights of working people. The country's international reputation will continue to suffer unless the government takes the proper steps to ensure the rule of law, and bring to justice the real perpetrators of this, and other, killings", said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder.

The ITUC is working with Amnesty International, the FIDH (International Federation of Human Rights), Human Rights Watch and OMCT (World Organisation Against Torture) to press the Cambodian authorities to ensure that Hy Vuthy's murder is properly investigated, that those responsible be brought to justice, and that the pattern of trade union and other human rights violations in the country be ended.

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 304 national affiliates.

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