

>>> ITUC Press <[press@ituc-csi.org](mailto:press@ituc-csi.org)> 17.09.2007 12:19 >>>  
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine...  
149/170907

#### Labour Deregulation and union rights violations in Panama

Brussels, 17 January 2007 (ITUC OnLine): A new ITUC report on core labour standards in Panama has been released today to coincide with Panama's trade policy review at the WTO on 17 and 19 September.

According to the report, trade unions' rights are seriously violated in Panama. Public sector workers cannot fully enjoy their trade union rights and trade unionists from both the public and private sector face reprisals and threats when demanding their rights. Referring to the assassinations in August of two trade unionists, Osvaldo Lorenzo Pérez and Luigi Antonio Argüeles, Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary stated that "the government must take all necessary measures to ensure that full investigation into these murders is carried out so that the intellectual and material authors are arrested and brought to court".

The report further underlines that a general trend towards deregulation and increased flexibility of employment relationships remains a serious barrier to trade union organisation in Panama. Indeed it is argued that several legal arrangements, under which companies can benefit from more flexible labour regulation, are not in conformity with ILO Conventions on the rights to organize and to bargain collectively.

The report calls upon the government to redouble its efforts to ensure that women achieve access to higher positions in all sectors and to eliminate the gender pay gap. In addition, it finds that ethnic minorities are seriously discriminated against in the field of employment and occupation. Finally according to the report, existing legal measures and supportive programmes have not yet managed to adequately tackle the problem of child labour, and the particular case of children working as domestic workers is highlighted for attention.

To read the full report [http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Panama\\_2007\\_final.pdf](http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Panama_2007_final.pdf)

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates.

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