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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Jordan: Violent repression of Vietnamese workers' strike

Brussels, 17 March 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC and the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) strongly protest against the assault perpetrated on 176 Vietnamese migrant workers at W&D Apparel in the Al Tajamouat Industrial Estate in Amman after they went on strike on February 10.

The workers organised the strike to protest against the exploitative working and living conditions they face at the at the Taiwanese-owned factory-work for which they had paid a Vietnamese labour broker 1,600 USD in recruitment fees, the equivalent of nearly three years' minimum wage, to be employed in Amman. The workers were promised wages of 220 USD a month in Jordan, but once they arrived, their employer confiscated their personal documents, forced them to work for up to 16 hours a day, and paid them between 80 and 150 USD per month.

To force the workers to return to their jobs, the company cut off food and offered compensation only to those who were the most productive. Ten days later, while the majority of the workers were still on strike, the employer called the police. Many workers were injured during the assault.

In a letter sent to the Jordanian authorities
http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ITUC-ITGLWF_letter_to_Jordan_MOL_17-03-08.pdf, the ITUC and the ITGLWF urged the government to ensure that W&D respects the right of the migrant workers to join or form a union of their choice and to bargain collectively with their employer and asked the government to conduct an urgent investigation into the role played by police in breaking up the strike and to ensure that any police officers found to have abused workers are punished.

"Systematic exploitation of migrant workers must stop," said Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary. "Where migrants are working in conditions of forced labour, their recruitment agency becomes a business in human trafficking." "What happened in Amman is criminalization of workers involved in the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association," he added.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.
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