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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Turkey: Trade union targeted by foul campaign

Brussels, 19 May 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Turkish road transport union Türkiye Motorlu Tasit Iscileri Sendikası (TÜMTİS), which is affiliated to both the ITUC-affiliated Confederation of Turkish Trade Unions (TÜRK-İS) as well as the London-based International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), has been the target of a foul campaign including dismissals and armed violence against its members, arrests based on false charges, detention without trial, and violations of the rights of the defense.

This case started in November 2007, when the Turkish police raided the TÜMTİS offices in Ankara and detained Ankara Branch President Nurettin Kılçdoğan, Secretary Hüseyin Babayigit, Financial Secretary Halil Keten, and Executive Board members Binali Güney, Selahattin Demir, Erkan Aydoğan and Atilla Yılmaz. The ITF had already lodged a strong protest in November 2007 with the Turkish government regarding these arrests, followed by a renewed protest on 21 April 2008, but to no avail.

Since the union started organising workers, hundreds of TÜMTİS members have been dismissed, and employers started filing cases based on false accusations. After all of these cases were dismissed by the relevant courts, the TÜMTİS leaders were accused of "setting up a criminal organisation." This accusation is completely groundless.

"The ITUC condemns this abuse of the Turkish legal system to target a trade union" declared Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary. "Today, we support the ITF and TÜMTİS in their fight against this attempt to shut down a workers' representative organization," he added.

In a letter sent to the authorities, <http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/20080520-Turkey.pdf>, the ITUC urges the Turkish government to take all necessary measures in order to ensure that basic trade union rights are respected in Turkey and that the legal system is not abused to make it impossible for trade unionists to operate without having to fear persecution, in itself an infringement of ILO Convention 98 on Collective Bargaining.

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

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