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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Nepal: Killings and Mass Arrests of Trade Unionists

Brussels, 9 September 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC strongly condemns the killing of two trade union members from Narayani Rolling Mills in the Bara District in Nepal, and the excessive violence subsequently used by the Nepal police against peaceful trade union protesters on Wednesday 3 September.

Kebal Raut and Krishna Yadav were shot by the police when they tried to hand over a package of workers' demands to their company management, Narayani Rolling Mills. Raut and Yadav were active members of the Nepali Factory Workers' Union (NFWU), an affiliate of the ITUC-affiliated Nepal Trade Union Congress - Independent (NTUC-I) that was engaged in collective bargaining talks with the company management.

During a peaceful protest in Kathmandu, the police arrested 80 trade union leaders, including Santosh Rajyamajhi, general secretary of the United Telecom Ltd (UTL) workers' trade union. The protest was in support of a union demand for an end to the system of temporary contracts for workers, for better working conditions and for the proper application of Nepal's labour and trade union laws. Violence was used by the police during the arrest and many of the workers were injured, including wounded by bullets. The workers were detained at Mahendra police station and released in the evening.

In a letter sent to the authorities, http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/80_union_leaders_arrested_during_peaceful_demonstration_two_workers_killed_08-09-08.pdf, the ITUC urges the government to ensure that Nepali police forces refrain from violence, that a fair compensation is provided to the family of deceased workers and to those injured and, finally, that the workers demands are met.

"Systematic repression against trade unionists must stop," said Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary. "A newly established democracy like Nepal should not accept this violence, especially because Nepal is obliged to respect core labour standards, by virtue of its membership of the International Labour Organisation (ILO)," he added.

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

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