

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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## Mauritania: ITUC Condemns Violent Repression of Trade Union March

Brussels, 8 October 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC strongly condemns the violent repression by the Mauritanian authorities against trade unionists who gathered together in Nouakchott on 7 October to take part in the World Day for Decent Work (WDDW). While welcoming the success of this global trade union event in a video message, the general secretary of the ITUC, Guy Ryder, also expressed his concern at the news of the violence meted out to Mauritanian trade unionists on 7 October.(\*).

Six national trade union centres (UTM, CGTM, CLTM, USLM, UNTM and CNTM), appealing for resistance to the military dictatorship in Mauritania, had announced that they would maintain their call for a peaceful demonstration on Tuesday afternoon in Nouakchott as part of the international celebration of the World Day for Decent Work, despite the junta's ban on all demonstrations. "We were expecting to be repressed, but it is the price we have to pay," said Abdallahi Ould Mohamed, known as Nanah, general secretary of the General Workers' Confederation of Mauritania (CGTM), in a statement to Agence France Presse. "If a trade union organisation cannot even express its concerns freely, out on the streets, then we may as well 'shut up shop' and leave! Demonstrating is all we have left," added the CGTM general secretary, voicing the appeal by the six national trade union centres for the defence of the fundamental rights suppressed by the military authorities. In the country's provinces, the regional trade union coordinating bodies had planned specific events, such as conferences and meetings, to mark the trade union World Day for Decent Work.

"About an hour after the demonstration, began they started to throw tear gas at us and beat us with clubs. It was very violent, and not even the women were spared," the general secretary of the CLTM, Samory Ould Beye, told the ITUC. "By nightfall, calm seemed to have been restored, but the trade unions' premises were still under police occupation," stated Samory Ould Beye, adding that "about 20 people were injured" as a result of the repression.

The national trade union centres have called consistently for an unconditional return to constitutional order ever since the coup d'Etat two months ago by General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, who has taken over the presidency of the High Council of State, and for the reinstatement of the President of the Republic and his Prime Minister in their legitimate posts. "The overriding interest of the Mauritanian nation lies in the respect of its constitutional will as expressed in the March 2007 elections which marked the culmination of a long democratic process that had made possible the establishment of genuine democratic institutions which remain the only legitimate institutions capable of ensuring the nation's lasting development."

The ITUC strongly condemned the military coup on 6 August and has expressed its concerns ever since, joining the call of the rest of the international community for the immediate restoration of constitutional order.

(\*) Video message from Guy Ryder at the close of the World Day for Decent Work <http://www.wddw.org/A-message-of-thanks-from-Guy-Ryder>  
The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>  
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