

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 12.11.2008 10:25 >>>

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine

190/121108

Jordan: Serious violations of workers' rights

Brussels, 12 November 2008 (ITUC OnLine): Violations of trade union rights and discrimination against migrant workers must be addressed in Jordan, according to a new ITUC report on core labour standards.

The report, which coincides with the Trade Policy Review of Jordan at the WTO, notes that many workers continue to be denied the right to organise, particularly public sector employees, civil servants, migrant workers, domestic workers, and agricultural workers.

The ITUC report particularly criticises the lack of substantial progress on workers' rights and working conditions in the export processing zones in Jordan, called qualified industrial zones (QIZs). Mistreatment is common practice, including long working hours without payment of overtime, abusive conditions and violations of workers' rights. Many workers in QIZs are migrant workers who are excluded from protections in the labour law and do not have the right to organise.

Abuses against many Asian women who migrate to work as domestic workers in Jordan persist. They are subject to forced conditions of work, withholding of passports, restrictions on movement, abusive treatment, non-payment of wages, threats and physical or sexual abuse, long working hours, and high deductions for food and shelter.

The report also refers to issues related to child labour, discrimination and forced labour. It notes that child labour is prevalent in Jordan, including in informal work in agriculture and domestic work in addition to a growing number of street children. Rights of working children are violated as 70% of them earn less than the minimum wage and almost half work more than nine hours per day. While forced labour exists in the Qualified Industrial Zones and among migrant workers in domestic work, agriculture and construction, the report states that trafficking of people for forced labour is a major issue. Discrimination in employment and remuneration is prohibited but according to the report there are legal shortcomings and in practice women have less access to employment and receive lower wages due to occupational segregation.

In its conclusions the report strongly recommends the putting in place of implementation mechanisms for the right to organise and collective bargaining as well as increased labour inspection in all areas. It stresses the need to introduce adequate penalties in cases of violations. The report urges increased protection for children and more urgent measures to address the instances of forced labour in domestic work and agriculture and the trafficking of people for the purpose of forced labour. It calls upon the government to increase efforts and

measures, including legislative changes, in line with ILO standards, in order to reduce wage and occupational inequalities. Finally, the report calls for urgent and effective measures to regulate recruitment agencies for domestic migrant labour and to stop abuses.

The ITUC report is available at:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Jordan_final_report_2008.pdf

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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