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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Human Rights Day: Another Long List of Violations in 2008

Brussels, 10 December 2008: The Universal Declaration of Human Rights celebrates its 60th anniversary this year. Trade unions from across the world are taking part in the commemorations, and in so doing strengthening the links between fundamental rights at work and other human rights. While the Universal Declaration has had a very major effect ever since it was created, the tendency in recent years has been one of diminishing respect of human and trade union rights.

"Everything must be done to reverse the tendency seeking to reduce the importance of fundamental rights", declared ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "It is vital that the global financial crisis not serve as a pretext for prolonging this harmful trend."

These fundamental rights are scorned in many countries, in particular the Philippines, Colombia and Guatemala. 57 trade unions have been killed in the Philippines since 2001. With 39 deaths in 2007, Colombia remains the most dangerous country in the world for trade union leaders. Even if the number of murders is down slightly, other forms of violence and intimidation are growing.

Guatemala is hard on Colombia's heels in the sad ranking of the most dangerous countries for trade unionists. Structural violence is a daily occurrence and the trade union movement is subject to constant repression. Against a background of general impunity, increasing numbers are murdered or attacked, whilst trade union offices and trade unionists' homes are the subjects of attacks.

These three countries are only some examples in a long list in which Zimbabwe and Burma also figure large. "Everyone is entitled to enjoy fundamental rights, whatever their nationality, colour or identity", declared ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. "Freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining are an integral part of these rights."

The "Stop the Killings" platform bringing together over 60 organisations, is commemorating the 60th anniversary of the Declaration of Human Rights by organising a torchlit march through the heart of Brussels. On this occasion, the platform will call for justice for the journalists, trade unionists, workers, Human rights activists, lawyers, young people and everyone else who have suffered repression for fighting for their elementary rights.

This year's "Stop the Killings" campaign is part of the "Decent work, decent life" campaign which is militating for the right to a decent income and decent work and for the right of association. A meeting is planned on Wednesday 10 December at 18.30 at the Place de la Monnaie in Brussels to highlight the sad reality of these murders.

From there, a torchlit procession will move to the International Trade Union House (HTUR), where the ITUC has its headquarters, and where a work of art will be inaugurated in memory of the victims. Artificial bullets will be symbolically inserted into this work by participants.

For more information about the march, please contact Wim De Ceukelaire on +32 484 11 92 31
www.stopthekillings.be

To see ITUC Statement on International Human Rights Day 2008:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/International_Human_Rights_Day - Statement.pdf

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 311 affiliated national organisations from 155 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org>
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

For further information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018.

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