

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Guatemala: widespread violent repression against workers

Brussels, 2 February 2009 (ITUC OnLine): A new ITUC report on core labour standards in Guatemala issued today to coincide with the trade policy review at the WTO demonstrates how trade unionists are being discriminated against, threatened and even murdered as a result of their trade union activities.

The ITUC report particularly condemns the failure of the Guatemalan government to ensure that the murders of trade unionists are investigated and prosecuted. "The killings, the death threats and the harassment must be stopped immediately," stated Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary. "The continuous violent repression of workers' right to form and join trade unions shows that the government is failing to implement the ILO Conventions it has ratified and that trade unionists do not have the liberty to carry out their union tasks without risking their lives."

According to the report due to legal deficiencies and fierce intimidation from many employers, trade union membership is only about three percent of the work force. The ITUC insists that the government of Guatemala puts its legislation into conformity with ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

The report finds that abuses, discrimination, mistreatment and sexual harassment against women in the export processing zones, also called "maquiladoras" (assembly plants), are common practice. In only three of the 200 maquilas in operation have trade unions been able to form. There are documented cases of women being subjected to pre-employment pregnancy tests – constituting a serious infringement of their human rights and a clear violation of ILO core Convention No. 111 on Discrimination that Guatemala ratified in 1960.

To read the full report:

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/WTO_Guatemala.final.pdf

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 316 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries. <http://www.ituc-csi.org> <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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