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Turkey: Twenty-two Unionists Remain In Detention

Brussels, 17 June 2009 (ITUC OnLine): On 29 May the ITUC, together with Education International (EI), wrote to the Turkish authorities to protest against the interventions by the Turkish police against their respective affiliates, the Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK), as well as teachers' union Egitim-Sen, which is in its turn affiliated to KESK (see previous online <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article3817>).

Fourteen of the people who were arrested after the police invasion of the KESK headquarters in Ankara and of KESK's local branch offices in Istanbul remain in custody to date. They are not the only Turkish unionists behind bars at the moment, as the total number of detained KESK and Egitim-Sen members and leaders, including those arrested on previous occasions, currently amounts to no less than 22. According to the information received by the ITUC, living conditions in the prison where the unionists are being held are really bad, there are concerns about the health of one of the detainees, i.e., former Egitim-Sen Women's secretary Elif Akgül Ates, and the defence lawyers still don't have access to their files.

On 15 August, negotiations will start on working conditions for public sector workers, which the Turkish authorities refer to as "collective consultative talks", which in itself is in breach of the International Labour Organisation's (ILO) Convention 98 on collective bargaining, ratified by Turkey in 1952.

In a letter http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/TU_arrests_29-05-09_-_follow-up_12_June.pdf sent to the Turkish government, the ITUC urges the prime minister to instruct the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all the arrested KESK and Egitim-Sen leaders and members, and to assume a more constructive approach towards the unions and their work in general.

"In no way can trade union activities in defence of workers' rights be exercised in a climate that is not free of violence, reprisals or threats of any kind against union leaders or members", said Guy Ryder, ITUC general secretary.

The ITUC represents 170 million workers in 312 affiliated national organisations from 157 countries.
<http://www.ituc-csi.org> <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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