

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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ITUC Statement on Human Rights Day

10 December 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC celebrates International Human Rights Day and pays tribute to all human rights defenders, including the many brave trade unionists struggling to defend workers' rights.

This year is a special year for the trade union movement, as this is also the year that we celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the ILO Convention on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, 1949 (no. 98).

The right to collective bargaining is a vital instrument to further the full enjoyment of social, cultural and economic human rights, as it helps reduce inequalities, raise wages, and improve working and living conditions for all.

The current financial crisis has shown us just how important it is to achieve these goals. Strengthening collective bargaining is an essential foundation for achieving them.

The effective recognition of this fundamental right, however faces great challenges in the 21st century, with globalization, the erosion of the employment relationship and the increase of precarious and informal employment.

Fighting for freedom of association and collective bargaining, fundamental workers' rights, remains a difficult and at times very perilous task. The year 2009 bears witness to the harassment, intimidation, persecution and in the worst cases murder of many trade unionists. Trade unionists and labour activists were killed in Colombia, Guatemala, Honduras, the Philippines, Bangladesh, Iraq and Guinea. Countless others were arrested in Zimbabwe, Iran, Turkey, South Korea, Gambia and many other countries.

The murder, violence and harassment perpetrated against trade unionists underlines how the repression of social, cultural and economic rights is directly linked to civil and political oppression.

Fundamental workers rights set out the rules for democracy and participation at the work place and underpin human rights and democracy rights in society as a whole. They must be protected and recognized as the fundamental human rights that they are.

The ITUC and its affiliates worldwide remain committed to strengthening freedom of association and collective bargaining and the realization of human rights for all.

The ITUC represents 175 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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