

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine

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Turkey: Thirteen Trade Union Leaders in Custody

Brussels, 11 December 2009 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) has firmly protested against yet another serious violation of trade union rights in Turkey. The long list of such violations poses major questions as to the willingness of the Turkish government to respect its obligations under international law.

According to the information received by the ITUC, on Monday 7 December, virtually the entire Executive Committee as well as some local branch office officials of Nakliyat-Is, a trade union which organises transport workers and which is affiliated to the ITUC-affiliated Devrimci İşçi Sendikaları Konfederasyonu (DISK), were detained, and the union headquarters were raided. In total, ten officials from the union are currently being kept in custody, including Nakliyat-Is President Ali Rıza Küçükosmanoglu, who is also a member of DISK's Executive Committee, and General Secretary Aziz Cengiz.

The police also searched their houses as well as union premises in Istanbul, Konya and Gebze. The trade unionists are being charged with "organizing a crime syndicate in order to generate financial profit". As in almost all other recent cases of trade union arrests, the defence lawyers have not yet been allowed to access their clients' files. The ITUC is concerned that the union is merely being targeted due to its recent successes in standing up for the rights of the workers it represents.

"This arrest of trade union leaders is clearly unacceptable and is reminiscent of the trial of 31 leaders and members of Turkish public sector union KESK," said Guy Ryder, ITUC General Secretary.

The ITUC attended that trial, which ended with the release of 22 of those charged, who had already spent nearly six months in prison without access to due process, in November of this year. All of the 31 will however have to appear in court again in March next year. (see previous ITUC Online: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-22-public-sector-union.html?lang=en>).

In a letter http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/09-12-09_Thirteen_TU_leaders_in_custody.pdf sent to the authorities, the ITUC urges Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan to take all necessary measures to ensure workers' rights are being respected in Turkey and to release all detained trade union leaders, in particular as the country is bound by international treaties including ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organise, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the European Convention on Human Rights.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates. [Http://www.ituc-csi.org](http://www.ituc-csi.org) <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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