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Costa Rica: Blatant Interference by Government into Trade Union Affairs

Brussels, 26 January 2010 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC, its regional organisation TUCA and its affiliates in Costa Rica roundly condemn the attempts by the government and the JAPDEVA port authority to undermine the leadership of the workers' union SINTRAJAP, which is campaigning against the privatisation of the Limón port in the Caribbean.

According to information received by the ITUC, the Costa Rican government decided to privatise the Limón port, and in seeking to do so has violated the human, labour and trade union rights of SINTRAJAP as well as Conventions 87 and 98 of the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

On 15 January, the JAPDEVA port authority's management held a parallel general assembly in one of the company's storerooms for workers close to the government, in violation of the principle of trade union independence enshrined in Convention 87.

This assembly, composed of a small group of people, approved the removal of the legitimate leadership of SINTRAJAP and proceeded to appoint a new set of leaders. The Labour Ministry, for its part, has charged the union in court with unfair labour practices, with the aim of destroying the union by legal means.

Costa Rica's working class has demonstrated its solidarity with SINTRAJAP in face of these attacks on freedom of association, taking its protest to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security on 20 January. The demonstrators demanded that the authorities sign a document making it clear that they do not recognise the newly-nominated de facto union leadership. "SINTRAJAP's cause is totally legitimate," said Guy Ryder, general secretary of the ITUC. "Freedom of association is an essential part of democracy and social justice."

In a letter to the Costa Rican authorities http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Injerencia_gubernamental_en_SUNTRAJAP.pdf the ITUC calls on President Oscar Arias to take urgent steps to resolve this blatant violation of the fundamental ILO Conventions ratified by Costa Rica.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.
<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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