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Severe Violations of Labour Rights in Malawi

Brussels, 8 June 2010 (ITUC OnLine): Serious and continued violations of fundamental workers' rights are disclosed in a new report by the ITUC on core labour standards in Malawi, published to coincide with the World Trade Organisation's (WTO) review of its trade policies on 1 June.

The report points specifically at child labour, as there are 1.4 million working children in Malawi: in other words, one out of every three children works. Forced labour is particularly serious on tobacco farms where tenant-labourers are exploited by systematic indebtedness and coerced into bonded labour by landlords. Sometimes the plantation slaves are forced to resort to the practice of "kupimbira", selling their children in order to erase or reduce their debt.

The report finds that in addition to gender discrimination, disabled persons and persons who live with HIV/AIDS are discriminated against in terms of access to employment.

Furthermore, the government impedes the right to strike by imposing a complex and time-consuming procedure to declare a strike. Many workers are afraid to join unions because of prevalent anti-union discrimination by employers: union leaders and members have frequently been targets for dismissals due to their union activities.

For the full report: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Microsoft_Word_-_28_May_-_Malawi_CLS_FINAL_2_-20100531120125.pdf

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