

ITUC OnLine

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USA: unresolved problems with the right to organise and other fundamental rights

Brussels, 29 September 2010 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC presents today its biannual report on core labour standards in the USA, coinciding with the Trade Policy Review of the USA at the WTO, taking place on 29 September and 1 October. It reveals a poor record on workers' protection, particularly with regard to trade union rights and child labour, areas in which serious violations continue to take place.

US law excludes large groups of workers from the right to organise. These include agricultural workers, many public sector workers, domestic workers, supervisors and independent contractors. Moreover, for most private sector workers forming trade unions is extremely difficult and anti-union pressure from employers is frequent. The report notes that there is a \$4 billion union-busting industry which aims at undermining trade union organising. Some 82 per cent of employers hire such companies that employ a wide range of anti-union tactics. Employers often force employees to listen to anti-union propaganda and threaten workers with company closures if they vote to form a trade union.

The report further notes that the Employee Free Choice Act, which would redress some of the imbalances workers are subject to, continues to be blocked by Senate Republicans despite passing the House of Representatives and gaining majority support in the Senate.

Child labour is in many cases not effectively addressed in the US, particularly in agriculture and not least because of the hazardous conditions that children are exposed to. Many of the children are migrant farm workers, often Latino. The AFL-CIO estimates that between 300,000 and 800,000 children are employed in agriculture under dangerous conditions. Moreover, the number of child labour inspections has been falling.

Concerning discrimination the report notes that women continue to earn less than men (77.1%). While women represent 47.8% of total employment, only 29.0% of executive and senior level officials and managers are women. Furthermore women have no guarantee of paid family leave.

Finally, the report notes that forced labour remains a problem in the US, in particular with forced labour in agriculture for migrant workers.

To read the full report: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/report-for-the-wto-general-council,7686.html>

The ITUC represents 176 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 301 national affiliates. <http://www.ituc-csi.org> y <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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