

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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ITUC Statement on Human Rights Day

Brussels, 10 December 2010 (ITUC OnLine): Fundamental human rights are under attack in every region of the world, and respect for workers' rights in particular is being undermined as working people are increasingly forced to bear the burden of the global economic crisis, in contravention of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other UN and International Labour Organisation instruments.

On this day, International Human Rights Day, life under absolute dictatorship remains the reality for tens of millions of people, in Burma, North Korea and many other countries while the international community lacks the capacity, or the will, to make human rights and democracy truly universal.

Trade unionists continue to be targeted through arrest, imprisonment and assault, with a dramatic 30% increase in murders of unionists documented in the latest ITUC Annual Survey compared to the previous year. In Colombia, which once again claims the record for the most murders of those standing up for workers' rights, trade unionists will gather today in Bogota and other cities to demand respect for trade union and other human rights. Advocates for workers' rights in the Philippines, Guatemala, Guinea, many Gulf States and other countries around the world face continued repression and violence. Brutal repression of legitimate trade union activity remains the norm in Iran, where teacher unionist Farzad Kamangar was executed along with four others on 9 May. The ITUC is resolutely opposed to the use of the death penalty, which continues to be applied in more than 30 other countries, including China, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, DR Congo, Egypt and the USA.

The awarding of the Nobel peace Prize this year is especially remarkable since the recipient, Liu Xiaobo, is serving an 11-year prison sentence imposed by the Chinese authorities in 2009. China has launched an international campaign to deter countries from attending the Nobel award ceremony, and is believed to have detained, or placed restrictions on, several hundred of Liu's supporters inside China. Dozens of labour activists have been imprisoned in China over the past year, swelling the ranks of those already in jails or in labour camps.

The world economic crisis has meant further erosion of basic rights for tens of millions of working people. Those already most vulnerable, in particular migrant workers, have in many cases experienced even greater violations of their rights than before. For even larger numbers of workers, austerity drives have meant erosion of collective bargaining rights as numerous governments, at the behest of the financial markets, put the burden of economic recovery on the shoulders of ordinary people.

The trade union movement, with its enduring commitment to democracy, solidarity, equity and the full expression of human rights, stands at the forefront of the fight against discrimination,

repression and exploitation. Through their own actions, and by working with other defenders of rights, trade unions around the world reaffirm their determination on this international human rights day, to stand up for universal respect for the fundamental human rights for all women and men, without exception.

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

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