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**Tunisia: Authorities Must Cease Repression and Start Dialogue**

Brussels, 31 December 2010 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has called on the Tunisian authorities to cease the violent repression against demonstrators demanding action on employment, and initiate serious dialogue with the national trade union centre UGTT to tackle the growing social crisis facing the country. Since a young unemployed Tunisian man set himself on fire on 17 December and a second youth committed suicide in the town of Sidi Bouzid, street protests involving regional federations of the ITUC-affiliated UGTT have taken place across the country, with police in many cases firing live ammunition at those taking part. Protesters are demanding action on unemployment and corruption, and respect for fundamental rights. Two young demonstrators have been killed and dozens more injured, and local UGTT offices have been placed under siege by the police. Several hundred people have been arrested, including lawyers and journalists.

"The ITUC insists that the authorities open genuine dialogue and negotiation to tackle the problems facing the country, instead of heavy-handed repression. Those who have been detained must be released immediately, and the government must fulfill its obligations under international law to respect trade union rights and other fundamental liberties. We fully support the efforts of the UGTT Executive Committee to ensure the release of those who have been detained," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

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

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