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Tunisia: ITUC Calls on Affiliates to Mobilise against Repression of Demonstrations

Brussels, 12 January 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation has called on its affiliated organisations around the globe to mobilise against the violent repression of demonstrators by the Tunisian security forces. According to trade union sources, over fifty people are thought to have died in clashes between the security forces and protestors, and many more have been injured.

The wave of demonstrations was unleashed when a young street vendor from Sidi Bouzid committed suicide on 17 December 2010 following the confiscation of his merchandise by the authorities. In four weeks, the protest movement has spread beyond Tunisia's socio-economically disadvantaged central region, reaching the capital, Tunis, and other towns across the country.

On Monday 10 January, President Zine El Abidine pledged to create 300,000 jobs in 2011 and 2012 to curb unemployment, and described the protests as "terrorist acts". The ITUC is calling for concrete measures to fulfil the welcome jobs pledge as well as an immediate halt to the violent repression and the opening of a genuine dialogue with the Tunisian people, to promote more equitable development.

The ITUC has joined with its Tunisian affiliate the UGTT in expressing solidarity with the people of Tunisia and supporting the call for a development model guaranteeing equal opportunities, the right to decent work, and job opportunities providing a stable income capable of meeting their needs.

"The opening of a genuine dialogue is urgently needed in Tunisia," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "The demonstrators are desperate young people just looking to make ends meet. It is up to the Tunisian authorities to take every action to help them. It must also ensure that those detained be immediately released. The government must fulfil its obligations under international law to respect trade union rights and fundamental liberties such as freedom of expression."

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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