

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Tunisia: ITUC Reaffirms Its Support for the UGTT and Calls for Genuine Democratic Transition

Brussels, 25 January 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation reiterates its total support for its Tunisian affiliate the UGTT and the Tunisian people in their struggle for the establishment of true democracy after the fall of the dictatorship of the deposed president, Ben Ali.

Although the government decreed that schools would reopen on Monday, the overwhelming success of the first day of the teachers' strike, with a participation rate of over 90%, decided otherwise. The striking primary school teachers, like most of the demonstrators still gathered outside the Prime Minister's offices in the Casbah in Tunis, are calling for the resignation of the transition government owing to the presence of former leaders of President Ben Ali's regime. Yesterday afternoon, police used tear gas and violence against the protestors. The ITUC firmly condemns such tactics.

"We fully support our Tunisian affiliate the UGTT," stated Sharan Burrow, general secretary of the ITUC. "The violence perpetrated over the last five weeks against the demonstrators has already cost too many lives and too much suffering. It must stop immediately. The opening of genuine, constructive dialogue with the UGTT – instead of the attacks on our affiliate that have appeared in the pro-government media in the last few days – and with the rest of the democratic forces in the country is necessary to ensure a peaceful transition towards true democracy that will protect fundamental freedoms, notably the freedom of expression, and will ensure social justice and economic development for all."

The ITUC welcomes the United Nations initiative to send a mission to Tunisia, due to arrive on Tuesday, but hopes that the mission will be able to live up to the challenges faced.

The International Trade Union Confederation again calls on its affiliated organisations worldwide to mobilise against the violence meted out to the Tunisian demonstrators and express their solidarity with their legitimate demands.

It was the suicide, on 17 December 2010, of a young street vendor in Sidi Bouzid following the confiscation of his merchandise by the authorities that triggered the movement of popular revolt which spread rapidly throughout the country, claiming the lives of over 100 people according to the UN, and led to the departure of former President Ben Ali.

As the street demonstrations multiply the ITUC has expressed serious concern, on 21 January, at the gestures of despair by citizens in several other countries of the region who see no hope for the future. Sharan Burrow calls once again on the governments of the region to be open to real social dialogue and listen to the legitimate aspirations of their people.

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

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