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ITUC Condemns Police Crackdown on Peaceful Demonstrators in Bahrain

Brussels 16 February 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned that violent crackdown against peaceful protesters in Bahrain and called on the authorities to respect freedom of expression and assembly. At least two protestors have been killed, and thousands continue to occupy the Pearl Roundabout in the capital Manama. UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Navi Pillay has also slammed the use of disproportionate force against the demonstrators.

The ITUC fully supports its affiliate, the General Federation of Bahrain Trade Unions, which yesterday released an urgent statement to back the demonstrators' demands for greater economic and political freedoms, such as a new constitution and fair elections.

In its statement, the GFBTU offered its condolences to families of the victims and asked the authorities to fully investigate, and ensure there is no impunity for those responsible for the unacceptable attacks on peaceful protestors. It called on the authorities to release all prisoners of opinion in the small island kingdom, as well as all those recently arrested during the protests. The GFBTU also proposed a national dialogue initiative to reduce the tensions that are at the root of the current widespread discontent.

“The authorities should act immediately to establish a national dialogue council with the social partners to urgently tackle the employment crisis, secure job opportunities for the thousands of new entrants to the labour market and develop a minimum wage policy which reflects the real cost of living,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. “We also support the GFBTU call for greater press freedom in the country. Freedom of expression is fundamental to ensuring democracy and social justice.”

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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