

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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Sharan Burrow in Egypt: ITUC Strengthens its Support to Independent Trade Union Movement as Key Basis for Democracy

Brussels, 14 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow has announced the imminent opening of an ITUC office in Egypt today at the opening of a two-day seminar in Cairo organised jointly with the new independent trade union federation in the country. “The challenge in building the new independent trade union movement in Egypt is huge, and crucial to the country’s future. We are finalising preparations to open an ITUC office in Cairo, to bring concrete and effective solidarity through coordinating the various forms of support activities coming from the trade union movement internationally, in order to help meet the needs and aspirations of the independent unions within the country,” said Burrow.

Burrow also met this morning with the new Egyptian Minister for Labour and Migration, Dr A H Ahmed El Bora’ey, to discuss the existing labour legislation of the Mubarak regime, and the demands of the independent union federation which the ITUC has supported since it was created on 30 January in the midst of the revolution. She highlighted the extent to which the former regime’s labour laws violate fundamental trade union rights, in particular the fact that they ensured a monopoly position of the official structure ETUF which was fully integrated with the former dictatorship. “This monopoly contradicts international law as set out in ILO Conventions on freedom of association which Egypt has ratified,” she said.

The ITUC welcomes the recent statement of the Labour Minister in favour of recognising trade union rights. “This development, welcomed also by the Director General of the ILO Juan Somavia this weekend, finally opens the door to the demand of the international trade union movement for the full respect of freedom of association in Egypt, in law and in practice. The ITUC calls on the Minister to do what is necessary to turn this statement into reality,” Burrow added.

Addressing a press conference this morning in Cairo, Burrow stated: “There is no real democracy without free, representative and independent trade unions. The Egyptian people, who have suffered for far too long the denial of their fundamental rights, poverty, injustice and corruption, have carried out a remarkable revolution, courageously mobilising including through massive strikes which brought the regime to its knees. Respect for the rights of Egypt’s working men and women and responding to their fundamental needs is essential for the construction of a democracy which respects fundamental rights, development and social justice.”

Link to video of Kamal Abbas (CTUWS):

<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI?gl=FR&hl=fr#p/a/u/2/91fd8TNitK4>

Link to interview with Kamal Abueitta (RETA) : <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spotlight-interview-with-kamal.html>

Link to video of Kamal Abueitta and Tarek Mustapha (RETA):

<http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI?gl=FR&hl=fr#p/a/u/1/rxAYO33vnkI>

Link to photos of opening conference of new independent trade union federation in Egypt (Cairo, 2 March): <http://www.ituc-csi.org/conference-of-the-new-independent.html>

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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