

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

ITUC OnLine
071/290311

Egypt: Decree to Criminalise Strikes a Betrayal of the Revolution

Brussels, 29 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has called on the Egyptian Prime Minister Essam Sharaf <http://www.ituc-csi.org/egypt-criminalising-strikes-and.html> to scrap a proposed decree which would make strikes a criminal offence, with prison terms of up to one year and fines of up to US\$ 90,000. The Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU) has described the decree as “a grave and worrisome development”, which has already been approved by the Supreme Council of the Armed Forces.

“Implementing this decree would be nothing less than a betrayal of the revolution. Millions of Egyptian workers continue to work for poverty wages, and depriving them of the right to strike, a fundamental right under international law, would remove an essential means for working people to achieve economic and social justice. By repressing legitimate union activity, it would also suffocate the development of a vibrant civil society, which Egypt desperately needs for building democracy,” said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The EFITU has recognised the serious efforts by the Ministers of Manpower and Immigration and of Finance to hold dialogue and negotiations with workers in some sectors and locations, but has called on the authorities to start dealing with Egyptian workers as “citizens, not subjects”.

The official trade union centre of the Mubarak era, the ETUF, has welcomed the announcement, pointing out that it conforms with the 2003 labour law imposed by Mubarak with the support of the ETUF.

“Working people do not need discredited and unrepresentative remnants of the old regime to talk on their behalf. Like workers everywhere, they are perfectly capable of organising their own trade unions, but they can only do this effectively if the authorities refrain from the anti-democratic habits of the past,” said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 305 affiliated national organisations from 151 countries and territories. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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