

### **Promoting Democracy in the Arab Region Will Also Protect Migrants**

Brussels 31 March 2011 (ITUC OnLine): From Libya (1) to Bahrain(2), migrant workers have been caught hostage in the whirlwind of the popular uprisings in the Arab world. All too often exploited and denied their rights, they are today the direct or indirect victims of the repressive policies imposed in response to the wave of hope for change sweeping the region. The ITUC is calling for urgent international solidarity and a long term response based on migrants' rights and development aid for their countries of origin.

Unable to find decent work in their home countries, they came to the region, particularly the oil economies, in the hope of earning enough to improve their families' lives. From being the silent, lowly lynchpin of these economies, they are now prime targets, at risk of their lives. In Libya, fleeing the violence and financially stranded, hundreds of thousands have headed for exile, abandoned in desperate situations.

"We call on the governments directly involved and the whole international community to mobilise urgently to respond to this humanitarian disaster, and to respect the fundamental human rights guaranteed in international law," stated Sharan Burrow.

"It is unacceptable that migrant workers be considered as a cheap and endlessly exploitable labour force that the oil rich economies can gain maximum profit from without any concern for their legitimate rights, the first of which is of course the right to life and safety, today under threat from the repressive policies repeatedly denounced by the trade union movement. The legitimate struggle for democracy and social justice in the Arab region also includes the respect and defence of migrant workers. This is a fundamental priority for the ITUC and, at this historic time for the region, we fully support our affiliated organisations active on this issue, such as the GFBTU of Bahrain, which has long been involved in the defence of migrant workers," added the ITUC General Secretary.

The ITUC believes the fate of migrant workers at this time of crisis once again highlights the global approach to migration based on the denial of the right to dignity and decent work. "These crises demonstrate yet again the urgent need to develop global migration policies based on migrants rights rather than on the purely economic and security considerations of the States concerned," continued Sharan Burrow.

(1) Read the article «Libya's humanitarian crisis: solidarity first": <http://www.ituc-csi.org/libya-s-humanitarian-crisis.html>

(2) Read the article Bahrain: migrants exploited, their lives at risk: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/bahrain-migrants-exploited-their.html>

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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