

Worldwide Survey: Repression of union rights and economic freedoms across the globe

- Survey across 143 countries - Americas still the deadliest region
- Seeds of Arab Spring in worker's repression and ignoring economic rights.

Brussels/Geneva, 8 June 2011 (ITUC Press): Colombia and the Americas maintain the lead in a grim record of murder and repression of workers involved in trade union activities in the latest world Annual Survey of violation of trade union rights released by the ITUC at the 100th ILO Conference.

The Annual Survey, conducted across 143 countries, paints a picture of people fighting for greater economic rights and freedom to organise, with many governments and businesses responding with repression, sackings, violence, death threats and murder.

Covering the year 2010, the Annual Survey reveals:

- 90 murders of trade union activists (49 in Colombia alone)
- another 75 recorded death threats and at least 2,500 arrests
- at least 5,000 sackings of unionists because of union activities.

"Around the world, workers, communities and populations are trying to claim basic rights to decent work and a decent life, and in many countries these people are being met with sackings, violence and in extreme cases murder by governments and by employers and businesses," the General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation, Sharan Burrow, said today.

The global trends highlighted in the survey include governments not enforcing labour laws, lack of support for the funding of inspection or protection, the lack of rights and abuse of migrant labour across the world, but particularly in the Gulf States, and the exploitation of the mainly female workforces in the world's export processing zones.

Across the Middle East, the 2010 Annual Survey paints a picture of governments trying to repress their people engaged in trying / fighting to better their lives economically through union representation, better wages and collective bargaining.

- In Egypt, the report shows sackings and reprisals by employers, police violence and numerous arrests as more and more workers joined independent trade unions and took strike action.
- In Tunisia, the report spotlights the rising tide of social protest linked to the fight for economic rights, and the government responding by meddling in the affairs of the trade union movement.
- In Bahrain, the report underscores the recurrent problem of unemployment and inequality, and this year the ITUC is monitoring the disappearances, arrests and violence directed at the independent trade unionists over the past months.

"Independent trade unions are essential to improving the living standards of ordinary workers across the globe. The ITUC Annual Survey shows that in fighting for basic rights to a decent job and decent life, many unionists put their lives on the line for the good of their communities.

Ms. Burrow also issued a warning to the global governing bodies and to the G20.

"The world's unemployment queue is growing. Without proper jobs or hope for the future, governments risk increasing political instability. Union rights are fundamental to democracy, to economic growth and to a civilised future," Ms. Burrow said.

To read the survey in full: <http://survey.ituc-csi.org>

To read the media releases concerning the regions:

Africa: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/press-release-difficult-to-be-a.html>

Americas: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/press-release-the-americas.html>

Asia: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/press-release-anti-union.html>

Arab World: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/press-release-very-sombre.html>

Europe: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/press-release-europe-workers.html>

For more information, and to arrange interviews in advance of the launch with regional contacts, or comments by the ITUC General Secretary, Sharan Burrow, please contact Mathieu Debroux on +32 476 621 018 or +32 2 224 0204 or email mathieu.debroux@ituc-csi.org or press@ituc-csi.org

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

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