

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC OnLine
117/060611

Deadly Repression in Syria: ITUC Expresses Solidarity with Strike Movement in Hama

Brussels, 6 June 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has once again denounced the appalling brutality of the increasingly violent repression in Syria and has expressed its solidarity with the general strike launched this weekend in the city of Hama.

According to the AFP and Reuters press agencies, residents of the city of Hama have, since Saturday, been staging a three-day general strike in tribute to the dozens of people killed by security forces during the demonstrations calling for democratic reforms.

"Week after week since the start of the protest movement against the dictatorial regime in Syria, the repression has been growing ever fiercer, showing absolutely total disrespect for human life," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "Braving the fear of mercilessly cruel repression, the population of the already martyr city of Hama have shown incredible courage by using the peaceful weapon of strike action. We would like them to hear our message of solidarity," continued Sharan Burrow.

"The Syrian regime is turning a deaf ear both to the growing message of protest conveyed by people across the country and to international pressure and sanctions. In the face of this escalation in the unbridled violent repression, the international community must step up the pressure and sanctions against the regime, which will be held accountable for these acts, punishable by international law," she added.

Hama, 210 km north of the capital Damascus, has been brought to a standstill. Even the shops are closed, according to witness reports gathered by AFP and Reuters. Over 60 people were reportedly killed in the repression of a protest bringing together over 50,000 people on Friday. On Saturday, over 10,000 people attended their funerals and another ten people in Hama were shot dead by security forces. The city of Hama had already, in 1982, been the scene of a massacre by the regime of Hafez al-Assad, in which 20,000 people were killed within 24 hours. On Sunday, at least another 28 lives were claimed by the repression in the north of the country. According to figures from NGOs, gathered by the United Nations, over 1,100 people have been killed since the start of the protests in mid March and thousands more have been arrested and tortured.

"The massacre must end and the iron shroud cloaking the country must be lifted. The international press as well as humanitarian and human rights organisations must be allowed to do their work there. The Syrian people's desire for basic freedoms and social justice are legitimate and cannot be ignored," concluded Sharan Burrow.

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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