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Discrimination Against Foreign Workers and Use of Forced Labour Persist

Brussels, 7 February 2012 (ITUC OnLine): A new report from the International Trade Union Confederation on workers' rights in Kuwait reveals restrictions on labour rights, extensive use of forced labour and discrimination in law and in practice. The report is delivered to the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on February 7, when the WTO Review Mechanism examines the trade policy of Kuwait.

The report finds that discriminatory limitations on foreign workers' organising rights have deprived 80 per cent of the workforce of the right to organise. Domestic workers – who are almost all foreign – are in any case excluded from the law's scope of application. Union bargaining power is reduced further by significant restrictions on the right to strike. The law also discriminates against women who are excluded from certain occupations. Bidun - stateless individuals - are also victims of the discriminatory system imposed by law; they are not entitled to the documents that would enable them to be permanently employed. In practice, they are usually confined to performing informal economic activities.

Kuwait uses a sponsorship system for the entry and employment of migrant labour which discriminates against migrants and makes them dependent on their employers. The sponsorship system does not meet international standards on migration and has resulted in the coercion of many migrant workers into becoming forced labourers, including many female domestic servants. The government fails to prevent or prosecute forced labour or to identify and protect victims of forced labour and abuse.

Read the full report: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/internationally-recognised-core,10577.html>

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 308 national affiliates.

Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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