

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)
ITUC OnLine

Turkey: Repression Against Women Trade Unionists

Brussels, 17 February 2012 (ITUC OnLine): The ongoing police harassment of public Turkish trade unions has this time targeted women. On 13 February, 15 women – leaders and activists preparing for International Women's Day (8 March) – were arrested and taken into custody. Their houses as well as the offices of the municipal workers union, Tüm Bel Sen; the health and social service workers union, SES; and of the Confederation of Civil Servants Trade Unions, KESK; were raided and searched. The State and the police regularly use the pretext of terrorism to crackdown on trade union organisations.

“There is no doubt that Turkish trade unions are facing a harsh campaign of repression and intimidation. This is unacceptable in a genuine democracy where trade unions must be able to carry out their legitimate role of defending workers,” said Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary.

After four days in custody, on the 16 of February, the women were charged with being members of an organisation considered illegal, KCK. Pending trial, nine out of the 15 women were held in provisional detention and the other six released. Twenty-seven members of KESK as of now are detained due to their trade union activities. Women trade unionists denouncing violence against women are regularly repressed particularly during celebrations on the 8th of March, International Women's Day, and the 25th of November, the UN International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

The ITUC, together with the ETUC, PSI, EPSU, EI and ETUCE, is urging the Turkish government to take all necessary measures to stop this anti-union campaign. They call on the government to respect European and international legislation such as the ILO Convention 87 on freedom of association and the right to organise. These organisations reiterate their strong support for the Turkish trade union movement.

For more information, read the common letter sent to the Turkish authorities: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-arrest-of-members-of-kesk.html>

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