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Turkey: New ITUC Report Highlights Government's Failure to Protect Workers

Brussels, 21 February 2012 (ITUC OnLine): A new ITUC report released today strongly criticizes the Turkish government's failure to protect workers from exploitation and intimidation by private-sector employers and state authorities. Weak and poorly-enforced labour laws, coupled with courts which are strongly biased in favour of employers, leave the country's workforce without protection from discrimination and largely unable to bargain collectively for decent wages and conditions.

"Turkey has an extremely poor record on labour rights, and the list of victims of anti-union harassment by the government and employers continues to grow," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

Heavy restrictions on the right to organise unions, government manipulation of union membership figures and the common practice of threats and intimidation to stop workers joining and forming unions mean that only 5.4% of workers are covered by collective bargaining agreements. The long-standing practice of judicial harassment of union advocates continues, with another 15 women arrested and taken into custody last week while their union office was raided by police. Many other unionists remain in prison, and peaceful union demonstrations are often subjected to violence by the authorities.

The report, submitted today to the World Trade Organisation's Trade Policy Review on Turkey, also finds that women in Turkey are concentrated in labour intensive industries, agriculture and informal activities which offer little or no security, income and social protection. Women face a considerable gender pay gap and only one out of four women participates in the formal workforce.

Child labour remains a serious problem. Even though 41 per cent of working children are on farms, employment in agriculture is not governed by the Labour Code but by a special "Code of Obligations" that does not provide adequate protection. In the cities, many children work on the street. Many street children - who are often victims of trafficking - are forced into beggary, the illegal drugs trade, petty crime and other worst forms of child labour.

To read the ITUC report: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/internationally-recognised-core,10662.html>

For information on the latest arrests: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/turkey-repression-against-women.html>

For any further information, please contact the ITUC press department at: +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 621 018

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