

INTERNATIONAL TRADE CONFEDERATION (ITUC)
ITUC OnLine

ILO Conference: ITUC outraged at Employers attack on ILO system

Geneva, 4 June 2012 (ITUC OnLine): The employers' group today blocked discussion of some of the worst cases of worker rights violations at the annual ILO conference in Geneva. Since 1926, the conference has discussed the most serious cases included in the annual report of the ILO's Committee of Experts, a 17-member committee of eminent and independent international jurists. This, year the International Organisation of Employers (IOE) has refused to discuss any cases.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "Employers at the ILO are trying to keep the worst abuses under wraps and avoid the international scrutiny which could help save lives and tackle some of the most appalling attacks on the rights of working people. Last year, 29 trade unionists were murdered in Colombia, but employers don't think the ILO should even discuss that, nor the terrible campaign of violence against trade unionists in Guatemala or Swaziland. Egyptians are in the midst of a battle for their most basic rights to decent work, but employers seem to be siding with the military and fundamentalist forces both of which want to deprive workers of a voice. The IOE has also refused to allow discussion of the withdrawal of collective bargaining rights in Greece and Spain, where plummeting incomes are worsening the country's economic plight and other serious cases where decent labour laws are under attack.

Employer organisations are playing a dangerous political game at the ILO, even as some individual companies are themselves increasingly prepared to discuss workers' rights openly and frankly.

"The ILO was established on the basis of social justice and a commitment to respect for the rule of law as it applies to working people. The world's most eminent labour law jurists have presented their findings to the ILO Conference, but the IOE is refusing to allow their findings to be examined," said Sharan Burrow.

Employers have hijacked the process based on a misplaced ideological conviction that the right to strike, guaranteed under numerous laws, domestic constitutions and international instruments, poses a threat to corporate greed.

"Employer groups are trying to undermine one of the most effective human rights mechanisms in the international system. This might help some of their least responsible member companies make some more profit and sustain governments which allow or even encourage violence against working people, but this will be at the cost of lives and livelihoods of some of the world's most vulnerable workers," said Burrow.

Video statements:

Zoe Lanara (Greece) talks about the crisis in the CAS at the ILC
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqOwGvaLJpU>

Barmes Dlamini (Swaziland), TUCOSWA President speaking from the IIO
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3zQG7YDb43A>

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 308 affiliated national organizations from 153 countries and territories.

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

For more information, please contact the ITUC Press Department on +32 2 224 0204 or +32 476 62 10 18.

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