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Algeria: North African Trade Unionists Arrested and Attacked

Brussels, 22 February 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has firmly condemned the attacks on the rights of North African trade unionists visiting Algeria to take part in the first North African Forum to Fight Unemployment and Precarious Work.

"The police raided the hotel where the trade unionists were staying and proceeded to arrest five Moroccans, three Tunisians and three Mauritanians, including two women," reported the independent national public workers' union SNAPAP. They were then driven directly to the airport and deported from the country, without being able to inform anyone by telephone.

The trade unionists detained were due to take part in a meeting at the Maison des syndicats, hired by the SNAPAP in Dar El Beïda (Algiers). Police surrounded the trade union premises early in the morning and prohibited any attempt to access or vacate the building. The police also went on to arrest Abdelkader Kherba, a member of the Algerian League for the Defence of Human Rights, LADDH, and the National Committee to Defend the Rights of the Unemployed, CNDDC, along with three members of the SNAPAP National Executive.

Following a number of meetings in Tunisia and Morocco, the representatives of unemployed graduates and young precarious workers in the Maghreb established the North African Union to Fight Unemployment and Precarious Work (L'Union maghrébine pour la lutte contre le chômage et le travail précaire). The meeting in Algeria was organised in preparation for the World Social Forum (WSF) to be held in Tunis from 26 to 30 March 2013. The Tunis WSF will place special emphasis on the stakes in terms of rights and social justice in the Maghreb region.

In a letter sent to the Algerian authorities, the ITUC firmly condemned the attacks against the trade unionists and urged the government to take every action to ensure that those arrested are released without delay.

"The ITUC bitterly regrets this display given by the Algerian authorities, through these attacks on trade unionists, of the need to continue to fight for respect for trade union rights and freedoms. The ITUC firmly condemns the police's arbitrary action against members of the SNAPAP and their guests, and demands the immediate and unconditional release of all those still under arrest," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

The ITUC represents 174 million workers in 156 countries and territories and has 315 national affiliates.

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