

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Sharan Burrow statement from Istanbul - 1 May 2013

I came to Istanbul to take part in the biggest May Day rally in Europe, to join the celebration and to support the determination of Turkish unions to fight for legislative implementation of labour rights.

Workers planned to gather in Taksim Square, the ceremonial site of the struggle since 1977, a place people celebrate and remember the people who were shot and killed in this very square in 1977 as they celebrated May Day.

But this year the Turkish Government showed that democracy is not genuine as they were determined to blockade workers from gathering in Taksim Square.

Thousands of riot police, army and special forces lined the streets. Tear gas, pepper spray and water cannons have been used to break up groups as small as 3 or 4 people.

Jammers are being used to block mobile phones so people cannot use twitter or text to arrange meeting places.

Two of our union headquarters are under siege with injured workers inside.

This is democracy under threat.

The legacy of today oppression will be long lasting in the hearts and minds of workers. The Turkish Government has been shamed in the eyes of the world. This brutal crackdown by the government to stop our brothers and sisters celebrating May Day has unmasked the true face of the Turkish Government.

There is no place for this behaviour from a country which will be taking on the leadership of the G20 in 2015.

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

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