

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Cambodia: Statement from International Trade Union Mission

Brussels, 13 January 2014 (ITUC OnLine): An international trade union mission to Cambodia has today called for the government to act immediately to investigate the killing of four garment workers during strikes on 3 January, release all 23 detained unionists, and set a minimum wage on which workers and their families can at least meet their basic needs.

The mission has expressed particular concern over the fate of union president Vorn Pao, who was severely beaten and remains in jail despite his poor physical condition.

In a statement <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-statement-on-cambodia-13> issued by the ITUC, its regional body ITUC-AP and the regional office of Global Union Federation IndustriALL, the mission demanded the establishment of a credible, independent inquiry to investigate the killings and for those responsible to be held accountable. This demand was put to Cambodia's Labour Minister today. The delegation also informed him that the plan announced to set up a government-controlled inquiry is seen as insufficient, given that government such committees have produced few results in the past.

Calls for urgent action to raise the minimum wage and a government pledge to fully respect ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association, which Cambodia has ratified, were also put to the Minister. A government proposal to set up a new Commission on wages, headed by the Finance Minister, was described as inadequate. No meeting of that Commission has been scheduled yet, and further delay in establishing a decent minimum wage is likely to lead to further industrial action as workers seek justice.

Threats by the garment employers body GMAC to take legal action to effectively bankrupt unions were also denounced by the delegation.

Cambodia's garment industry, with an annual turnover of US\$5.1bn, can afford to pay more than the monthly minimum wage of US\$ 100 according to the statement, which points to IndustriALL research that a minimum of US\$260 is needed to cover basic expenses of a family of four.

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