

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
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ITUC Global Rights Index names world's ten worst countries for workers

Brussels, 10 June 2015 (ITUC OnLine): The Gulf States are among the world's worst countries for workers' rights, while workers under European austerity measures endured the starker deterioration of standards, according to the 2015 Global Rights Index.

The ITUC rights index ranks 141 countries against 97 internationally recognised indicators to assess where workers' rights are best protected, in law and in practice.

"Workers in the Gulf States where the draconian 'kafala' system is widespread endure many of the violations which make the Middle East and North Africa the world's worst region for fundamental rights at work," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

"But in a worrying trend, European workers have witnessed the starker deterioration of their rights in the last 12 months due to widespread government-imposed austerity measures taking effect."

The International Trade Union Confederation has been collecting data on the abuse of trade union rights around the world for more than 30 years. This is the second year the ITUC has presented its findings through the Global Rights Index, offering a snapshot for government and business to see how their laws and supply chains have deteriorated or improved in the last 12 months.

The ten worst countries for working people are Belarus, China, Colombia, Egypt, Guatemala, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Swaziland and United Arab Emirates.

Other countries ranked lower but had worsening conditions this year in a clear negative trend for workers. These nations were Burundi, Dominican Republic, Hong Kong, Iran, Georgia, Russia, United Kingdom and Spain.

"Workers in Colombia and Guatemala have been murdered for trying to negotiate better working conditions, while in Qatar and Saudi Arabia migrants continue to endure forced labour and labour law exclusions which amount to modern slavery.

"In 73 of 141 countries, workers faced dismissals, suspensions, pay cuts and demotions for attempting to negotiate better working conditions, while in 84 countries employers adopted illegal strategies to deny or delay bargaining with representative trade unions.

"While a handful of countries have attained perfect scores compared to last year, there's been an increase across the board in the number of countries where conditions have worsened, including nations such as Cameroon, Hungary, Spain and South Africa," Ms Burrow said.

The report's key findings include:

- Out of a total of 141 countries, the number where workers faced arbitrary arrest and detention increased from 35 to 44, and included countries such as Spain and Brazil.
- In almost 60 per cent of countries, certain types of workers are excluded from their fundamental labour rights.

- Unionists were murdered in 11 countries, one up from last year, including 22 deaths in Colombia alone.
- Seventy per cent of countries have workers with no right to strike.
- Two thirds of countries deny workers collective bargaining rights.
- More than half of countries in the survey deny workers access to the rule of law.

In the past year, unions have reported violent crackdowns on peaceful protests in Cambodia, Costa Rica, Paraguay and Ukraine; in Qatar around 100 migrant workers striking against poverty wages were arrested last November, while in March this year a Filipino union organiser became the 18th case of extra-judicial killing since 2010.

“International labour standards prescribe access to fundamental rights for all workers,” Ms Burrow said. “Yet as corporate power and inequality grows internationally, these results show governments and employers in almost every country around the world must improve their treatment of workers and arrest the increase in workplace violations.”

The 2015 ITUC Global Rights Index rates countries from one to five according to 97 indicators, with an overall score placing countries in one to five rankings.

1. Irregular violations of rights: 16 countries including Finland & Uruguay
2. Repeated violations of rights: 26 countries including Japan & Ireland
3. Regular violations of rights: 36 countries including Israel & Australia
4. Systematic violations of rights: 27 countries including Poland & USA
5. No guarantee of rights: 27 countries including Belarus, China & Nigeria
- 5+ No guarantee of rights due to breakdown of the rule of law: nine countries including Syria, Central African Republic & Palestine

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Read the report – ITUC Global Rights Index: The worst places in the world for workers:
http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/survey_global_rights_index_2015_en.pdf

Download the ITUC Global Rights Index map: http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc-violationmap-2015-en_final.pdf

Download the ITUC Global Rights Index infographics: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-global-rights-index-2015>

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