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Indonesia: Workers Arrested at Minimum Wage Protest

Brussels, 30 October 2015 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned the arrest of more than 20 demonstrators during a rally in Jakarta today to protest against the government's decision to impose a new minimum wage system in the country. The new system gives the government the power to unilaterally set the minimum wage, excluding trade unions from the process. Reports received by the ITUC indicate that 23 protestors were arrested, as around 20,000 people gathered in Jakarta to voice their opposition to the government's move.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "The authorities should release the arrested workers immediately, and respect their right to hold a peaceful rally to protest against a government decision that will cause widespread harm across the country. Working people in Indonesia are already suffering from the deteriorating economic situation and the government, at the behest of powerful Indonesian and international business interests, is now moving to hold down wages. This will decrease the purchasing power of households, hurting families and also reducing economic demand."

"Instead of basing the minimum wage on the actual cost of living as in the past, it will now be based on an inflation/GDP formula which will not properly reflect the real costs which workers and their families are experiencing. We call on the government to open a genuine dialogue with Indonesia's trade unions to ensure a fair system rather than one which will only increase inequality."

A decree issued by the Governor of Jakarta, imposing restrictions on the location of demonstrations, has been attacked today by Indonesian journalists and others as an unnecessary restriction and a step-back for democracy and freedom of speech.

"Indonesia should uphold and maintain freedom of speech and assembly, cornerstones of any democracy, and refrain from placing unnecessary and authoritarian restrictions on them," said Burrow.

The ITUC represents 180 million workers in 162 countries and territories and has 333 national affiliates.

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