

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION  
ITUC OnLine

Syria: Peace, Rebuilding and an End to Dictatorship

Brussels, 11 March 2016 (ITUC OnLine): Five years after the Assad regime, with its brutal repression of peaceful civil dissent, triggered the carnage which has cost over 250,000 lives, the partial cease-fire in Syria holds the hope of an end to the litany of failures of international diplomacy, and the possibility that peace may prevail. Humanitarian aid is reaching many beleaguered communities, where the local population has been deprived of sufficient food, medical supplies and other essentials. A resumption of UN-brokered peace talks is also now possible and the UN must fulfil its peace and security responsibilities, with the utmost priority being to stop the bombing of civilians.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "Governments around the world, in particular those which have real influence over the protagonists in the Syria conflict, must now show the courage and leadership that the people of Syria so desperately need, to bring peace and respect for human rights. This includes pressure not only on the Syrian government and the moderate opposition, but also those governments which have directly and indirectly supported the growth of extremist fundamentalist groups".

"Syria is yet one more example of the failure of a purely militaristic response by the international community to deep social, economic and human rights crises in the Middle East and North Africa. The Syrian people want peace. They want an end to dictatorship and they need jobs so they can rebuild their country and build a future for their families. Dialogue, democracy and social and economic justice are the strongest antidotes to conflict, and have to be central to the global response to a catastrophe which is engulfing the region and spilling into neighbouring countries and the European Union with the largest refugee crisis in 70 years."

The European Trade Union Confederation has sharply criticised  
<https://www.etuc.org/press/europe-and-turkey-fail-reach-deal-managing-humanitarian-crisis#.VuAjLdC1RjY> the European Union over its negotiations over refugees with Turkey, pointing out that paying money to Turkey will not remove the danger which Syrians, Iraqis and others are exposed to in their own countries.

ETUC General Secretary Luca Visentini said "The first duty of the international community is to give shelter to asylum-seekers. Despite the heroic efforts of many citizens, the EU is clearly failing to do so."

"The people of Turkey, as in so many other countries, have shown incredible compassion and solidarity with the hundreds of thousands who have fled violence and repression. Yet the Turkish government itself seems determined to increase its iron grip on the country, repressing freedom of speech, freedom of association and other fundamental rights," said Burrow.

The ITUC is calling on the UN and its member states to maintain maximum pressure for the cease-fire to continue, and for a quick resumption of peace negotiations.

"The people of Syria urgently need peace, aid and economic reconstruction as the starting point for rebuilding the country and building a political system based on democracy and

respect for human rights. More aid is vital for the other affected countries too, such as Jordan which is hosting more than 600,000 Syrians who have fled the conflict. The UN and its member states must also recognise that a solution in Syria alone will not be enough.

Violence, conflict, fundamentalist terrorism and corruption are destroying lives in Iraq, Libya, Yemen and elsewhere in the region, and the people there are just as deserving of the solidarity and support that the world can, and must, offer," said Burrow.

For more information, materials to share and to take action, visit:

<https://withsyria.com/>  
<https://www.whitehelmets.org/>

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