

## INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

### ITUC OnLine

#### Cambodia: ITUC Deplores New Anti-Union Law

Brussels, 6 April 2016 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has deplored the approval of a new Trade Union Law by the National Assembly of Cambodia this week. The law was pushed through despite repeated objections by trade unions, the International Labour Organization and several global garment brands. The law, backed by Prime Minister Hun Sen's ruling party, would among other things impose new limits on the right to strike, facilitate government intervention in internal union affairs and permit third parties to seek the dissolution of trade unions - while at the same time imposing only miniscule penalties on employers for unfair labour practices. Trade unionists who peacefully protested at the time of the vote on the new law were bludgeoned by government thugs ( <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WM1uga2vErE> ), leaving several injured.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said: "Cambodia, with the backing of a retrograde local garment industry federation, has pushed back against decent working conditions at every opportunity. If it does not reverse this course soon, the country will find itself at the margins of the global garment industry at tremendous cost to the economy, which is heavily reliant on this sector. Major companies know the risks, to workers and to their corporate brands, of doing business on the back of worker repression, and consumers everywhere are increasingly alert to and concerned about the kind of inhuman treatment in global supply chains that this legislation means. The violence and judicial harassment perpetrated by the government against those who stand up for fundamental rights guaranteed under international law must end."

The ITUC is also deeply concerned that the trumped-up incitement charges against then-trade union leader Rong Chhun (and now member of the National Election Committee for the opposition party), in the context of the 2014 wage strikes, is progressing towards possible indictment and trial. Other unionists may also soon be indicted. Indictment and trial would be only further evidence of the government's abuse of the rule of law and the creation of an environment for workers among the most hostile in South East Asia.

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

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