

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION  
ITUC OnLine

Turkey: Government Stepping up Repression of Unions

Brussels, 2 May 2016 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has called on the Turkish government to cease its intensified repression of trade unions, and protested at its plan to amend labour laws to further weaken workers' rights. Dozens of academics have been dismissed for signing a peace statement calling for an end to repression against Kurdish and other people in the Kurdish provinces, several of them have been banned from leaving the country and criminal proceedings have been launched against many. The ITUC has also been informed that 1,390 union members have been placed under investigation for participating in an event calling for peace and democracy. Some 284 are in exile or have been transferred, 403 have been forced to retire, 102 placed under investigation and 97 have been charged with "insulting the President". Police are also now being deployed against workers taking industrial action, such as at the Renault plant in the city of Bursa <http://www.industriall-union.org/turkey-renault-dismisses-workers-using-police-violence-instead-of-upholding-commitments> .

The proposed amendments to the labour law and employment agency law were pushed through parliament without proper consultation. The changes would give employers a virtually unfettered right to place workers on insecure and short-term contracts, thus avoiding legal obligations and allowing employers to prevent workers from joining trade unions.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary said: "The government seems to be intent on crushing unions and depriving workers in Turkey of their legitimate rights, enshrined in international law. This is not the behaviour of a democracy, and will seriously damage living standards and ultimately undermine Turkey's own domestic economy. The exercise of power and control over people's lives seems to be more important to the authorities than the well-being of the people of Turkey. We call on President Erdogan to cease the harassment and repression of those who are simply seeking peace and respect for human rights, and to drop the planned labour law changes which will leave working people at the mercy of employers with no way to defend their rights and build a decent life for themselves and their families."

On Sunday, some 200 were arrested as police used water cannon and tear gas to stop people reaching Istanbul's Taksim Square, a traditional May Day rallying point declared off-limits by the authorities. One man was killed when hit by one of the police water cannon trucks. Thousands more took part in rallies at the officially designated venue in the Bakirkoy district of Istanbul and in other cities around the country.

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

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