

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
ITUC OnLine

Landmark UN Report on Freedom of Assembly and Association

Brussels, 20 October 2016 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has welcomed the publication of a major new UN report

http://freeassembly.net/reports/workers-rights/?link_id=0&can_id=983a51036e09e2652d4a5cc3969a1b8c&source=email-high-profile-report-underscores-freedom-of-association-for-workers-as-key-to-human-rights-3&email_referrer=high-profile-report-underscores-freedom-of-association-for-workers-as-key-to-human-rights-3&email_subject=high-profile-report-underscores-freedom-of-association-for-workers-as-key-to-human-rights

on the right to freedom of assembly and association, and called on governments to act on its findings. The report, by UN Special Rapporteur and distinguished Kenyan lawyer Maina Kiai, is to be presented to the UN General Assembly in New York on 20 October.

In Kiai's own words, "Our world and its globalised economy are changing at a lightning pace, and it is critical that the tools we use to protect labour rights adapt just as quickly," the Special Rapporteur writes in the report. "A first step towards this goal is to obliterate the antiquated and artificial distinction between labour rights and human rights generally. Labour rights are human rights, and the ability to exercise these rights in the workplace is prerequisite for workers to enjoy a broad range of other rights, whether economic, social, cultural, political or otherwise."

Amongst its key conclusions, the report finds that:

Workers have little leverage to change the conditions that entrench poverty, fuel inequality and limit democracy;

Millions of informal workers labour in global supply chains, where some of the worst abuses of freedom of association and peaceful assembly are found and where migrant workers are often concentrated; and

Discrimination, abuse and relegation to jobs at the bottom of the global economy undermine women's ability to join and form organisations that defend their interests.

"We congratulate Maina Kiai on this landmark report, bringing the struggles of workers from around the world to the heart of the United Nations. Millions upon millions of workers are denied the right to organise and decent work by governments and through the actions of employers including some of the world's best-known companies. Governments need to act to ensure these rights, to end the twin scandals of poverty and exploitation in supply chains, and to formalise informal work," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow.

Workers from Mexico, Honduras, Hong Kong and Swaziland will give testimony at a special event <http://www.solidaritycenter.org/special-un-report-worker-rights-key-human-rights/>, co-sponsored by the ITUC, AFL-CIO Solidarity Center and others, in New York on the day following the presentation of the report to the General Assembly.

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

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