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Kazakhstan: Repression of Independent Trade Unions

Brussels, 23 January 2017 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has written to the President of Kazakhstan, Nursultan Nazarbayev, to demand the release of imprisoned trade unionists and an end to repression of the ITUC-affiliated Confederation of Independent Trade Union of Kazakhstan KNPRK and its affiliates.

Having already criticised a recent court decision to withdraw registration of the KNPRK and two of its affiliates in violation of ILO Convention 87, the ITUC has learned of the arrest of KNPRK Deputy President Nurbek Kushakbaev on the grounds that he called for strike action, as well as of local trade union leader Amin Yeleusinov. The arrests follow a hunger strike launched on 5 January by dozens of workers at the Oil Construction Company LLP in Western Kazakhstan, which has been supported by several hundred more workers.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "Ever since the bloody repression against oil workers, at Zhanaozen in 2011, the authorities seem to react in a paranoid fashion against any union activity that could lead to industrial action. Kazakhstan's Constitution gives supremacy to international treaties over national law, and by continuing to suppress freedom of association, the authorities are effectively acting against their own national Constitution. These actions are reminiscent of some of the more repressive regimes, such as Egypt, and have no place in a country that seeks respect and trust in the international community. We call on the President to release those arrested without delay, and to cease the repressive measures aimed at workers who are simply standing up their right to set up and join unions of their own choice and take action to defend decent work, as guaranteed under international law."

The ITUC represents 181 million workers in 163 countries and territories and has 340 national affiliates.

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