



# Freedom Report: Peace, Democratic Rights

An Update to the 2015 Frontlines Report Prepared for the ITUC General Council

November 2016



ITUC CSI IGB International Trade Union Confederation

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# Introduction

Peace, democracy, human rights and freedom are denied to millions of people in today's fractured world.

The ITUC Freedom report of 2015 (<http://www.ituc-csi.org/freedom-frontlines-report-on>) laid out a framework of our concerns by addressing the closing of democratic spaces, the consequences of attacks on rights and freedom and the ITUC's responses.

In 2016, the escalation of conflict, the growth in inequality, the now systemic unemployment for young people, the persistence of the informal economy, the rise in violence against women, growing numbers of people in modern slavery, an even greater refugee crisis, armed conflicts and unpredictable acts of terrorism mean too many people are living in fear.

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*"Barrel bombs - sometimes filled with chlorine - are the biggest killer of civilians in Syria today. Our unarmed and neutral rescue workers have saved more than 60,000 people from the attacks in Syria, but there are many we cannot reach. There are children trapped in rubble we cannot hear. Stop the bombs. Please stop the bombs."*

**Raed Saleh - The White Helmets**

# The Escalation of Conflict

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The war in Syria has become even more bloody. Emerging from a freedom fight against a dictator, state terrorism has seen whole communities devastated, hundreds of thousands killed, millions displaced, and multiple foreign powers joining the fight or supporting their allies in a proxy war.

Geopolitics is again taking precedence over the value of human life. The UN Security Council shows just how impotent it is as it fails to follow through on its demand to stop the barrel bombs. Inaction has tragically enabled ISIS to carve out territory and enlarge it into Iraq and beyond.

And new or renewed conflict seems intractable; in South Sudan, Nigeria, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ukraine and Yemen. Even the glimmer of hope in Libya is now in pieces with armed groups asserting control.

The tensions in Afghanistan and Iraq and the illegal occupation of Palestine continue, while the 2014 attacks on Gaza remind us of how peoples' lives are sacrificed in the name of political supremacy.

And fundamentalist militants are increasingly taking acts of terrorism to the cities of their perceived enemies.

<http://www.conflictmap.org/>

Yet the very leaders who claim to support an end to conflict know that the value of the military expenditure increased by more than 1% last year. Their stated commitment to peace means little when the profits of the multinationals in their own countries are at stake.

It is time to stop the bombs, stop the killing and stop the deadly arms trade.

*The uncontrolled proliferation of arms and ammunition fuels conflicts, increases human rights abuses and exacerbates poverty. While one person dies every minute as a result of armed violence, millions more suffer displacement, human rights abuses, loss of services through direct damage to infrastructure and increased unemployment. There is an irrefutable link between high levels of armed violence and poverty, particularly from the illicit trade. Bringing the licit trade under control is the first necessary step toward addressing a reduction in the illicit trade.*

**controlarms.org**

The fear of people in conflict zones, coupled with economic desperation and extreme weather events, is driving the worst refugee crisis in 70 years.

Building walls and assembling military barriers are not the answer, but are themselves a political war waged by politicians seeking public support by preaching fear and xenophobia.



# Violence and Attacks on Trade Union Members

Beyond the zones of violent conflict, we are seeing a new wave of political repression, with the purging of political and civic opposition in Turkey, Korea and Egypt and in the political coup in Brazil.

Violence against unions and others in civil society is a scourge that aids this oppression. Trade union members were murdered in more than 11 countries in 2015, and democratic space shrank in some 22% of countries.

Fundamental rights, such as freedom of assembly, of association and of speech are under attack, under the guise of security measures in many countries with threats of terrorist activity being used as a pretext.

Elsewhere, austerity measures and the desire to attract foreign investment have been used to propagate repressive laws and policies, with corruption and corporate greed fueling historic levels of inequality. Legal and institutional barriers are being introduced in order to limit the capacity of people to fight injustice. Almost half of the world's states have implemented controls that limit freedom.

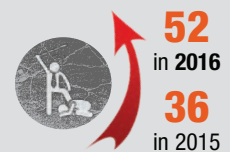
## ITUC GLOBAL RIGHTS INDEX 2016



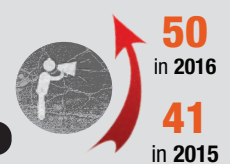
### Violations of workers' rights



### Countries which expose workers to physical violence



### Countries which deny or constrain free speech and freedom of assembly



### Results by region

- 5+ No guarantee of rights due to the breakdown of the rule of law
- 5 No guarantee of rights
- 4 Repeated violations of rights
- 3 Regular violations of rights
- 2 Systematic violations of rights
- 1 Irregular violations of rights
- No data

### Europe

Austerity has failed yet governments in Europe continue to attack workers' rights and too many countries deny refugees safe haven and the right to work

2.47

### Asia Pacific

4

3.16  
Americas

3.32  
Africa

4.26  
Middle East and North Africa

Slavery in the Gulf States makes the region the worst in the world for working people

The 2016 ITUC Global Rights Index covers 141 countries, reporting takes place April 2015 – March 2016. The ITUC documents violations of internationally recognised collective labour rights by governments and employers, each country is analysed against a list of 97 indicators derived from ILO conventions and jurisprudence and represents violations of workers' rights in law and practice.

# The Social Contract is Broken – the collapse of trust in Government and the rise of populism

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The failure of governments to support and defend their people from the negative impacts of corporate globalisation has led to a complete breakdown of trust, and the rise of demagogues whose simplistic lies and racist invective are rapidly gaining political ground.

Four years ago in 2012 the first ITUC Global Poll found that the democratic contract with voters was broken in many countries. Governments were warned to pay heed to their people or risk increasing political and economic uncertainty. 67% of voters believed that they did not have enough influence on economic decisions.

In 2013 the ITUC Global poll found that people felt abandoned by their governments because they are failing to tackle unemployment and prioritising business interests over working families.

The consequences of this breakdown in trust have proved to be fertile ground for the spread of anger and fear, undermining the promise of peace in Colombia, driving the vote for Brexit and fueling the rise of the likes of Donald Trump in the USA. Neo-nazism is now a fact of political life in parts of Europe and elsewhere.

And in Colombia, former President Uribe is seeking a return to power, by destroying the prospects for peace. We stand with our Colombian affiliates in their common determination to end the conflict forever.

## ***The strategy of the No to Peace campaign in Colombia.***

*“Our goal was to make people vote angry. Some strategists from Panama and Brazil advised us to give up on explaining the peace agreement, but rather to start focusing the messaging on the outrage. For the ads targeting middle and upper income voters we focused on impunity, eligibility and tax reform (proposed for FARC leaders), while in the lower strata we focused on the subsidies (given to FARC). We incorporated the local accents for each region. On the Coastal region for example we individualized the message, saying that Colombia would become like Venezuela.”*

## ***Referendum Campaigner, Colombia.***

# Investing in peace, secure democracy and prosperity

The global workforce is in trouble with historic levels of unemployment, poverty wages and insecure work throughout supply chains, reinforced by the desperation of no or inadequate social protection. This is creating the fear that is driving the ugly face of xenophobia and global tension; a tension that can morph into fascism, extremism and conflict all too easily.

There is no lack of wealth in the world, which is now three times richer than 30 years ago. Thus the pathway to peace and prosperity lies in an end to corporate greed and corruption, and investment in people everywhere. This means investment in jobs, in infrastructure, in the care economy and in social protection with the guarantee of essential services such as education, health, childcare and aged care. It means the guarantee of a minimum wage on which people can live with dignity and the right to bargain collectively for a fair share of prosperity.

No country should be denied the right of development, industrialization and of peace. No person should be captive of modern slavery including the Kafala system of the rich gulf states. No person fleeing their home for a safe and secure life should be excluded from safe haven and the right to work.

Unions are proud to stand united with these values. We say 'refugees are welcome'.

To heal our fractured world, the only answers are investment in people and their communities, in the inclusion of all peoples, all generations.

Trade unions have stood at the frontlines of struggles for democratic change and social justice throughout history. In many countries we are the only organised voice of opposition to governments attacking their own people or operating at the behest of corporate power and vested interests. Unions continue to successfully mobilise against, and support community opposition to, racism, dictatorship, slavery and oppression.

There is a long list of proud union struggles since the birth of our movement. Last year we celebrated with the UGTT, which was central in mobilising and negotiating the democratic transition in Tunisia while avoiding the level of bloodshed in other countries during the so-called "Arab Spring".

Unions mobilised the community groups that were behind the drafting of a Tunisian Constitution which guarantees fundamental principles such as the separation of powers, an independent judiciary, freedom of association, the right to organise and the right to strike. And they were rewarded with the Nobel Peace Prize for the 'Dialogue Quartet'.



# The Global Refugee Crisis

## Governments across the world avoiding responsibility for refugees – Unions say refugees welcome

More than 60 million people are fleeing from war, terror or abject poverty but it is the richest Governments who have forgotten their own history.

With 80 percent of displaced persons remaining in developing countries, Europe and other G20 nations are scrambling to minimize their refugee intake. With the exception of Germany and Sweden we are witnessing the construction of walls and military lines on borders to keep desperate human beings from safe haven. In the United States, Canada and Australia, governments have offered to take minimal numbers of Syrian refugees and there is a growing callousness that accepts a rationale to send all others back.

Countries like Greece, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon and Turkey need more assistance, and the generosity of people in opening their homes and communities to welcome refugees puts governments to shame. But to pay Turkey to keep refugees out of Europe is not and will never be an acceptable solution. It is a gross breach of fundamental human rights and denies the history of the last century where European refugees were welcomed into the workforces of many nations and, with a social compact, saw jobs grow and economies prosper.

People are not tradable commodities.

There can be no integration without relocation. We urge European and other governments to reopen their discussions on resettlement and integration instead of putting all their efforts into closing the door. Responsibility for refugees cannot simply be traded away.

Many countries, including in Europe, need workers as their populations age. The skills and incomes refugees can contribute to host nations, boost economic growth and job creation to the benefit of refugees and host communities alike. But it requires investment. It's time for leaders to pay more attention to the state of the economy and employers and unions agree that migrants and refugees are a part of the solution. The world simply cannot meet the challenges we all face by sticking to the failed, discredited politics of austerity.

At the core of the refugee crisis are, of course, people. The ITUC and the ETUC are appalled by the lack of unity and humanity in government policies.

The heartening fact is that in almost all nations the compassion of people is ahead of that of their governments. 73 percent of people in a Tent Foundation ten-country poll acknowledged their responsibility to accept refugees.

The ITUC is calling on the UN, the G7 and the G20 to support the right to safe haven and work for all migrants. This requires a global, cooperative resettlement strategy and the global funds vital for social protection and the infrastructure to meet refugee needs in host nations, just as it requires action to end conflicts and poverty.

It is paramount that countries respect their obligations to accept their share of refugees so as not to create areas that will soon become ghettos without rights.

The failure to demonstrate the solidarity that values human life is abhorrent and the growing xenophobia in the political realm is distressing. Fear-mongering about new arrivals threatening to take jobs, without action to ensure equal treatment in the workplace or any serious plan to improve infrastructure, grow jobs and produce growth to build a better future and provide opportunities for all, is destructive.

While Governments across the world avoid responsibility for refugees, unions say “refugees welcome”.

Every democratic country can do better to ensure safe haven for people at risk, but so too must our leaders act to bring an end to conflict and displacement. Just as we declare that refugees are welcome we acknowledge that most want peace and security in their own homes. An urgent global effort to stop the bombs and ensure democracy in Syria and neighbouring countries is long overdue.

The ITUC and the ETUC have jointly committed to pursue the humanitarian and economically sensible response to the refugee crisis as set out above.

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-special-briefing-the-global>



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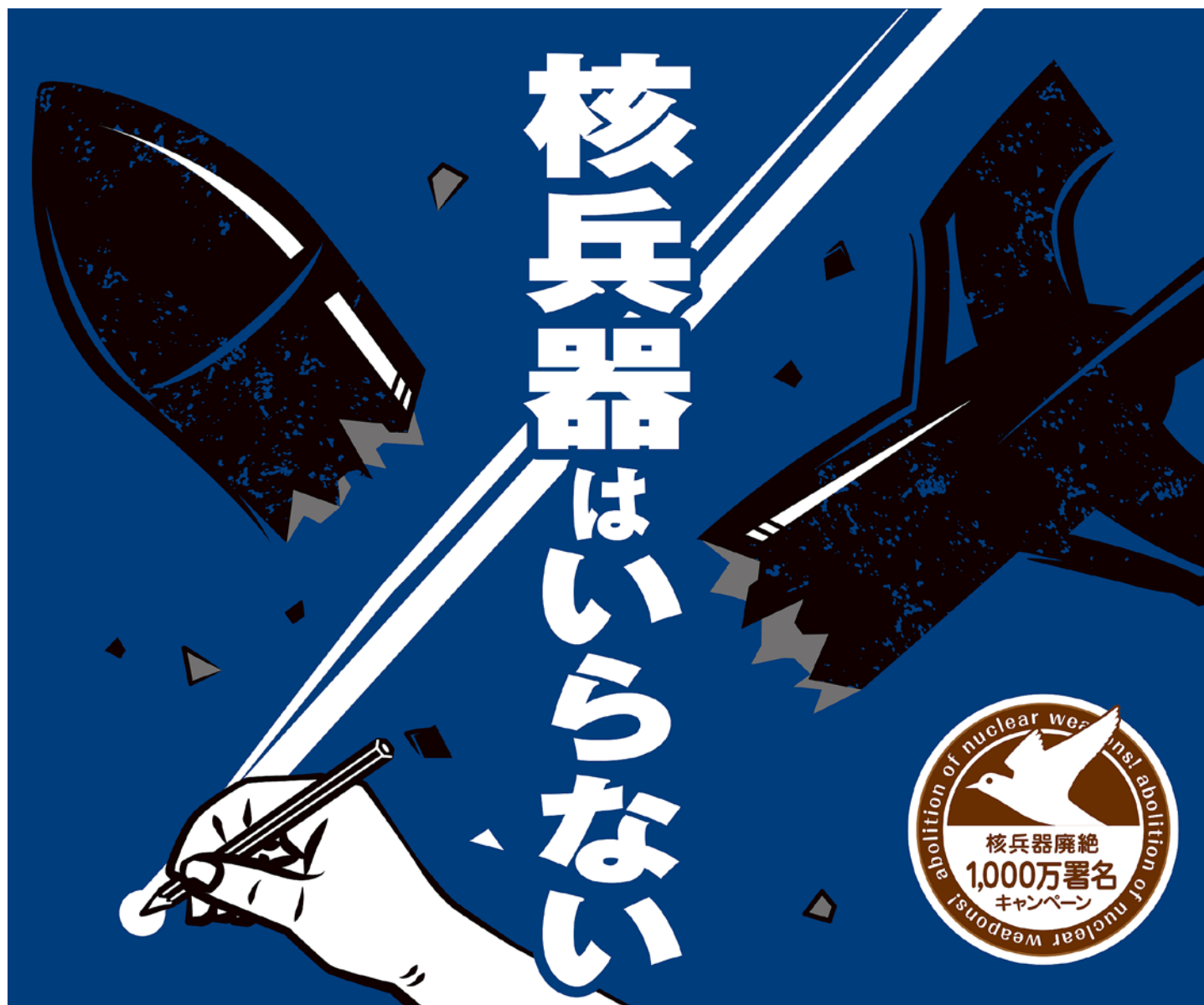
And while RENGO and others remain our global conscience against nuclear weapons and for disarmament, the world lives in fear of the insanity the North Korean dictatorship and its nuclear weapons trajectory.

<http://www.ituc-csi.org/petition-no-to-nuclear-weapons-15899>

Disarmament, including a ban on nuclear weapons, is more important than ever. The massive trade in arms and huge cost it imposes on economies and societies are a threat to peace and to investment in social protection and jobs elsewhere in the economy. It is true that there are many jobs in the manufacturing, trade and services associated with arms but like any political choice, the danger is in both not dealing with the issue itself and in failing to ensure the livelihoods of the workers and communities who depend on that trade.

Unions face the fall-out from political investment or divestment and changes in global demand which impact on workers every day. The centrality of social dialogue and the consequent commitment to national and industry plans for managing these shifts is our key demand.

Ensuring peace, secure democracy and prosperity requires people to talk to each other to confront and resolve the challenges we face. Unions know that social dialogue and collective bargaining work. In September the Prime Minister of Sweden launched with us the call for a Global Deal based on just that - social dialogue - people working together in peace and unity for the promise of the UN Sustainable Development Goals.



# A Global Deal: Enhanced Social Dialogue for Decent Work and Inclusive Growth

## Declaration of Support

Social dialogue in the labor market and quality industrial relations can reduce possible inequalities arising from globalisation, increase productivity, boost economic growth and contribute to sustainable development.

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development- adopted by the UN - includes a goal on promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all (SDG8). Social dialogue in the world of work is a vital means for realising this goal.

Social dialogue includes all types of negotiation, consultation or exchange of information between or among representatives of governments, employers and workers on issues of common interest relating to economic and social policy.

We, from Governments, businesses and employers' organisations, trade unions, international organisations and other stakeholders, support a new and better understanding and dialogue between labour and capital, on the basis of the Global Deal concept. We will take action to enhance social dialogue in the labour market as a means to achieve decent work and steadily improve job quality, thus contributing to inclusive growth and shared prosperity.

- For states, the Global Deal means ratifying or making sustained efforts towards ratifying and respecting the ILO's fundamental conventions. States should recognise social dialogue as part of the democratic form of government, facilitate structures for social dialogue and encourage concrete agreements through collective negotiations.

- For employers, the Global Deal means respecting these rights in practice, operating with social responsibility and being prepared to negotiate agreements locally, nationally, regionally or globally. Operating with social responsibility also means that businesses should exercise due diligence in seeking responsible supply chains according to international standards.
- For trade unions, the Global Deal means acting in accordance with their social responsibilities when they negotiate, but also contributing to the overall development of the company or the organisation.
- For States, employers, businesses, and unions, the Global Deal is a means of moving forward together on shared objectives for inclusive growth and sustainable development.

As part of our work to promote the Global Deal concept, including in support of national efforts to achieve SDG8, we will exchange ideas, solutions, experiences and challenges, lessons learned and policy advice; promote concrete initiatives and voluntary commitments in support of the Global Deal concept; highlight opportunities for cooperation and capacity building in the area of decent work and job quality; and encourage research and analytical work on the role of institutions in the labour market. The OECD Job Quality Framework can be a useful tool to assess results of efforts to promote social dialogue in the labour market.

We commit to reporting publicly on actions undertaken to realise the above principles and to updating our commitments in light of new challenges and opportunities.

# A collective voice to oppose Government oppression

Where democracy, rights and dialogue are absent, working people and their families are on the frontlines, as we see in Brazil, Egypt, Korea and Turkey.

With sadness but determination we launched in September a global campaign to fight the corruption and corporate takeover of the parliament and the breakdown in the rule of law in Brazil where former President Lula, who stood against poverty and inequality, is under attack with the ruthless conspiracy of a media conglomerate with too much power.

<http://standwithlula.org/>

Korean workers, their rights under vicious attack by their own government, can tell the truth about Samsung. Workers in Indonesia, the Philippines, and many other nations tell of bullying, union busting and exploitation. The most recent scandal is Samsung's bullying of government officials to keep secret the name of a chemical that has killed more than 70 workers and resulted in another 200 cancer-related illnesses, citing 'trade secrets'.

[https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=3190](https://www.labourstartcampaigns.net/show_campaign.cgi?c=3190)

<http://act.ituc-csi.org/en/samsung>

We must build our collective voice.

## Conclusion

We stand for peace, democracy, rights and the rule of law.

We support the Global Deal launched by the Swedish Prime Minister. Organising and mobilizing members holds the key to building workers' power and in turn using that power to ensure rights and shared prosperity in a global economy.

Through our frontlines campaigns and our ongoing priorities, we are fighting for the realisation of these foundations in a zero poverty- zero carbon world.

**There is no compromise on democratic rights and freedoms.**

