

REALISING RIGHTS

Big business, big finance and their political allies have intensified their campaign to undermine and resist efforts by unions to defend and expand fundamental workers' rights. They are now using the global economic crisis they precipitated as a rationale for an intensified campaign to sweep away existing rights, leaving workers even more vulnerable to exploitation.

The global model of capital is driving inequality, creating social unrest and undermining the very basis of democracy.

Workers' rights are not negotiable, yet decent work deficits exist in varying degrees in most nations throughout global supply chains and for the majority of women and migrants.

People feel abandoned by their governments as governments prioritise business interests over worker interests. Just 13 percent of people believe their government focuses on the interests of working families over those of business.

FACTS

- Union members in about 28% of nations have reported physical violence to the ITUC. In the past 27 years, 2942 trade unionists have been murdered in Colombia. In Guatemala, 73 trade unionists have been murdered since 2007.
- Union members in about 53% of nations have reported anti-union discrimination to the ITUC.
- Union members in about 25% of nations have reported to the ITUC that employers refuse to bargain despite existing collective bargaining institutions.
- 47 countries have not ratified international conventions on fundamental workers' rights.
- 33 countries, representing over half of the world's population, have not ratified the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention (No.87), including China, India, the US and Brazil.
- 20.9 million people are working in forced labour conditions, or 3 out of every 1,000 workers are 'modern slaves' with migrant and indigenous workers particularly vulnerable.
- 1 in 3 women worldwide will experience physical and/or sexual violence.
- A gender pay gap exists with a range of 8 to 48 percent in every nation.

COUNTRIES AT RISK

The ITUC Countries at Risk strategy comprises nations where there are liberation struggles, conflict, struggles against discrimination and oppression or countries with a profound failure to guarantee laws that ensure fundamental rights for all workers.

This strategy has two components: a 'WATCH LIST' for coordinated action and a 'TARGETED LIST' where the unions have or can be assisted to build capacity to organise around impunity and fundamental rights.

Affiliates in up to 10 countries in any year will be supported as targeted countries.

Congress identifies the following countries for consideration:

WATCH LIST

- Palestine
- Syria
- Afghanistan
- Guinea
- Colombia
- Belarus
- Algeria
- Pakistan
- Haiti
- Belarus
- Iraq
- Mexico
- Philippines
- Egypt
- Iran
- Mali
- Honduras
- Greece
- Cambodia

TARGETED LIST

- Zimbabwe
- Bangladesh
- Bahrain
- Fiji
- Georgia
- Swaziland
- Guatemala
- Turkey
- Burma/Myanmar

Employers' attacks on rights, including 'freedom of association', 'collective bargaining' and the 'right to strike', is a global campaign and, along with the corporate defence of exploitative global trade and supply chains, must be overturned.

The Bangladesh Accord (2013) achieved by IndustriALL and UNI is a model to be replicated.

Jyrki Raina, General Secretary of IndustriALL Global Union: “The Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh is the only credible programme that brands can sign. The requirements of this programme are straightforward, commonsense measures which will have a vital impact on worker safety in factories in Bangladesh. It is now time for all other brands to commit to sustainable safety in Bangladesh.”

UNI Global Union General Secretary Philip Jennings: “The Accord is a call for justice and provides a sustainable solution to factory safety which cannot now be ignored. These global retailers must change their behaviour. We have seen the terrible consequences in Bangladesh of the business- as-usual mentality. Companies must sign up and show they are finally willing to take on their responsibilities to these factory workers who are ultimately part of their global workforce.”



Women' rights are central to workplace justice



“....we were treated with no respect, no value for the work we do! I asked myself on that day (1966) why: why were we treated differently, why do we work long hours and do not say no to the master, clapping our hands while being very poorly paid ? That was my aha moment, and if I can make a difference, we can all do it...”

Myrtle Witbooi leader of SADDAWU and President of the International Domestic Workers Union.

The slave states where forced labour is growing are key targets for coordinated global campaigns. The ILO estimates 600,000 migrant workers are tricked and trapped into forced labour across the Middle East.



“It took two years for Bhupendra, determined to fight and relying on handouts from friends, to get any compensation after his right leg was crushed in an accident working in Qatar.”

Bhupendra is a father who lives and works in Qatar. A few months ago a tragic injury changed his work life forever. Watch his story.

<http://www.rerunthevote.org/Bhupendra-s-story> (English)

<http://www.rerunthevote.org/L-histoire-de-Bhupendra?lang=fr> (French)

<http://www.rerunthevote.org/La-historia-de-Bhupendra?lang=es> (Spanish)

A new agenda for developing ILO standards on forced labour and the informal economy will be part of such campaigns and the supervisory mechanism of the ILO vigorously defended.

Workers Stories: have you got a story of an inspirational worker or group of workers to share? You will have the possibility to see these and send us your union's ambitions here when the Congress section of the website is up and running: www.ituc.org/Congress2014

ACTION Points

Rights are non-negotiable and unions everywhere are committed to a national and a global struggle to build a just world. This requires:

- targeted campaigning based on strategic research including current details of violations of trade union rights in the form of the ITUC Survey and detailed analysis to promote particular policy objectives
- strategies to secure the recognition of the right to collective bargaining and freedom of association by governments and employers, including ratification of ILO Conventions
- skills and targeted strategies for the effective use of the ILO supervisory mechanisms and regional mechanisms by the trade union movement
- campaign and organising support for trade unions demanding labour rights or facing attacks on labour legislation as well as targeted litigation
- strategic plans to stop the use of precarious work and irregular work
- communication strategies to raise awareness of trade union struggles
- engagement with human rights organisations and other allies to deepen campaign capacity
- support and action to realise the Count us in! campaign such that women equal men in our union leadership