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HTUR/MT

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Trade Union Premises

Dear Prime Minister,

I am writing to protest the expulsion of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania (KSSH) and the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Albania (BSPSH) from their offices on 1 August, the manner in which this expulsion was carried out and to remind you of pledges made by your government that, had they been honoured, would have avoided an ugly event that has paralysed an important democratic institution in your country. I am also writing to urge you to intervene immediately and personally so as to enable our affiliates to resume their normal activities without delay.

As you, no doubt, are aware, on the morning of the first of August the police entered the trade union offices at the “Pallati Ali Kelmendi” on Boulevard “Zogu I Pare” in Tirana and forcefully removed trade union property. This action was undertaken without prior notice and trade union staff were prevented from entering the building. Trade union property was damaged and documents were destroyed. I understand that while this was going on the trade unions attempted to liaise with the Government and the police authorities but that their efforts were to no avail.

I am aware that the police action was based on a court decision involving the restitution of property. Restitution is not the issue here. The issue is that the pursuit of this policy need not have involved the kind of behaviour displayed on the first of August. Other principles must also be respected. Among these are the international obligation of governments to refrain from any interference which would impede trade unions lawfully organising their administration and activities as well as the obligation of governments to ensure that trade unions are able to work in a climate free from fear and intimidation. There is no good reason to permit a situation where trade unions have no place to work and their documentation and equipment is seized, damaged or destroyed.

You will recall that the dispute over the premises for trade unions has been the subject of earlier correspondence. In July 2006 the Minister of Justice confirmed the Government’s commitment to find an alternative solution for the trade union premises to a delegation of officials from the International Labour Organisation and our predecessor organisation, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions. This repeated the commitment made

by the Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities in letter to our affiliate in Poland, NPZZ Solidarnosc that providing appropriate premises for the normal activity of trade unions had been and would remain a “permanent commitment”.

We believe that these commitments reflected an appreciation of your country’s international obligations and that they should have been followed through. But these commitments were not honoured, and Albanian workers suddenly have nowhere to go for the advice and support that they get from their trade union because their trade union has no office.

This is a serious matter which requires your immediate attention. Unless it is quickly remedied it will not be forgotten. As you know Albania is scheduled to report on the application of Convention No. 87 to the International Labour Organisation by the first of September. The failure to resolve this problem should influence how this report is received. Moreover, we will pursue this issue in other forms.

On behalf of 168 million of workers in 153 countries, including all countries in the European Union, I urge you, Mr. Prime Minister, to find a fast and durable solution for the trade union premises

I hope to hear from you soon,

Yours sincerely,


General Secretary

Cc: Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Ministry of European Integration
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Albania to the UNOG