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Public Sector Strikes and the Need for Social Dialogue

Honourable Prime Minister,

In recent days, public sector workers in Kuwait have mobilized in massive numbers throughout the country to demand not only better wages but greater respect on the job. The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents 176 million workers in 151 countries and territories, including Kuwait, supports the aspirations of our brothers and sisters in Kuwait. At the same time, we are deeply concerned at reports of harsh measures taken by the government against striking workers, including the threat of legal action and the use of replacement workers in an effort to undermine these strikes. A course of action based on the repression of trade union and democratic rights will only serve to inflame the current conflict rather than to bring about a settlement that responds to legitimate demands of Kuwaiti workers.

The ITUC has been informed that the Kuwait Trade Union Federation (KTUF), our affiliate in the country, has proposed to the government the establishment of a high-level commission which is comprised of members of the trade unions, the Minister Council, the Civil Service Authority and other key representatives, to bargain in good faith over the workers' key demands. To date, the government has yet to respond to directly this request. Instead, it has established its own commission with the purpose of taking measures necessary to end the strikes.

We strongly urge the government to engage in meaningful dialogue with the KTUF to find a resolution to this dispute. The ITUC stands at the ready to support the proposed process. However, should the government of Kuwait continue in its efforts to frustrate legal trade union activity in support of workers' legitimate demands, we will stand by our affiliate and take such action necessary, including seeking the intervention of the International Labour Organization (ILO), to support them in their struggle to achieve respect and fairness at work.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary