



His Excellency Hosni Mubarak
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt
`Abdin Palace
Cairo
Egypt

Brussels, Thursday, October 11, 2007

Imprisonment of Messrs Kamal Abbas of the CTUWS and Mohamed Helmy

Dear President,

Solidar, its partners in the Global Network and the International Trade Union Confederation write to express our most serious condemnation of the recent imprisonment of Mr Kamal Abbas, General Coordinator of the Center for Trade Unions and Workers Services (CTUWS), and his lawyer, Mr Mohamed Helmy. We are particularly concerned that these prison sentences follow a long tradition of repression of the CTUWS, an independent civil society organisation committed to defending trade union and workers rights in Egypt. In this particular case, it appears that the Egyptian judiciary has, through its sentence, conspired against the freedom to publish information and the freedom of expression, as enshrined in Article 47 of the Egyptian Constitution:

“Freedom of opinion shall be guaranteed. Every individual shall have the right to express his opinion and to publicise it verbally, in writing, by photography or by other means of expression within the limits of the law. Self criticism and constructive criticism shall guarantee the safety of the national structure”.

According to our sources, the outcome of the lawsuit against Messrs Abbas and Helmy, filed by National Democratic Party member Mr Mohamed Mustafa Ibrahim, is belied by events and findings leading up to Judge Mohamed Rashad's final decision. The allegations of corruption against Mr Ibrahim made in a CTWUS publication, which are the centre of the lawsuit, were corroborated by an internal investigation conducted by the plaintiff's own organisation, the Youth Centre. Despite such evidence and the ensuing decision by the Governor of Cairo to dissolve the Youth Centre's Board of Director, of which Mr Ibrahim is a member, it appears there has been a concerted effort to silence the CTUWS.

Mr President, Egypt is a leader in the Arab World and your Government has a responsibility to protect the right to freedom of expression and other fundamental human rights. The right for the CTUWS to freely conduct its work to protect and advocate for workers is something the Egyptian government should be eager to protect and could legitimately be proud of. This could serve to enhance Egypt's stature as a respected member of the community of nations, one that respects fundamental human rights and workers' rights enshrined in international conventions.

On behalf of Solidar, its Global Network partners and the ITUC, we urge you, Mr President, to ensure that the CTUWS is not persecuted in its work and ask that you review this particular case. In intervening directly in this case, we believe that the government of Egypt would prove its commitment to international human rights. Moreover, we believe that Egyptian citizens and workers would be better served by Messrs Abbas and Helmy being released and left free to conduct their work. We fully support the work of CTUWS, which as an organisation has repeatedly stated that it is committed to promoting the spirit of social dialogue in order to avoid disturbances and troubles. We cannot accept that the CTUWS be intimidated through the courts or otherwise for actions that are perfectly legal and legitimate.

Yours sincerely,

Conny Reuter
Secretary General



Guy Ryder
General Secretary

