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EI/ITUC-fw

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Dozens of trade unionists arrested on terrorism charges

Prime Minister,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and Education International (EI) wish to jointly express their strongest protest against the interventions by the Turkish police against their respective affiliates, i.e. the Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK), as well as teachers' union Egitim Sen, which is in its turn affiliated to KESK, which took place in the early morning of Thursday 28 May 2009.

EI and the ITUC have been informed by their member organisations that the Turkish police invaded the KESK headquarters in Ankara and at KESK local branch offices in Izmir, Istanbul, Van and Manisa. More than 30 Egitim Sen members were arrested, including the following people:

Songul Morsümbül - KESK Executive Committee member and member of the ITUC Women's Committee

Glin Sbert - Egitim Sen Executive Committee member

Yksel Z. - SES Izmir Branch Executive Committee member

Meryem A. - BES Izmir Branch Representative

Lami Z. – Egitim Sen Ankara No1 Branch member

Hasan Umar – Egitim Sen Van Branch member

Hac Ali Sipahi - Egitim Sen Izmir Branch member

Abdurrahman Dademir - Former KESK General Secretary

Elif Akgül – Former Egitim Sen Executive Committee member

Aziz Akiklolu - Egitim Sen Manisa Branch member

Refik Aslan – retired teacher / former Egitim Sen Manisa Branch member

According to our latest information, six unionists would have already been released after having their statement taken by the police. The others, however, remain in detention, and we understand that some of our colleagues have been sexually harassed. The police has not given the reason for this operation yet, but according to the Turkish press, it was "set up in the framework of a bigger operation aimed at cracking down on the terrorist organisation PKK". Furthermore, union documents and computers have been seized.

We cannot see this intervention and the ensuing detentions as anything else than anti-union harassment, which in itself constitutes a serious infringement of Convention 87 on freedom of association of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), which your country ratified in 1993. The rights of workers' organizations can only be exercised in a climate that is free of violence, reprisals or threats of any kind against their leaders and membership, and it is up to governments to ensure that this principle is respected.

EI and the ITUC firmly condemn this anti-union attack, and urge you to instruct the authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all the arrested KESK and Egitim Sen leaders and members. We also demand that your government respect and ensure fundamental trade union rights in Turkey.

Yours sincerely,



Guy Ryder
ITUC General Secretary



Fred Van Leeuwen
EI General Secretary