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HTUR/NT

Brussels, 12 December 2011

KESK Trial December 13 - judicial harassment against unionists

Prime Minister,

On behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) representing 175 million workers in 153 countries and territories, and following Education International (EI) initiative, I am writing to denounce once again the judicial harassment against unionists in Turkey as well as to express our serious concern over the recent events in Turkey in which trade unionists have been targeted for exercising their rights to freely associate and peacefully demonstrate.

As already denounced in previous communication, the ITUC is particularly alarmed with the 2012 arrests, detentions and prosecutions targeting members of the Confederation of Public Sector Workers' Unions (KESK), an ITUC and ETUC affiliate.

On December 13, an international delegation will attend the court hearing of the case of 15 KESK female union officers and members arrested in February in connection with the International Women's Day celebration. Three female union members are still in detention while the others were freed pending trial.

On June 25, police actions across Turkey that resulted in the arrests of 71 union leaders and members in their homes and offices. This attack was carried out under the pretext of an operation against an illegal terrorist organization. While some of the detainees were released on Friday 29 June, 28 trade unionists remain in detention, pending trial.

These arrests are part of a disturbing pattern of injustice against individuals and groups – many are teachers, trade unionists, journalists, political activists, or members of the human rights community – seeking to exercise their basic rights as citizens.

Turkey being a long-standing member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the ITUC wants to remind your government that the harassment and detention of trade union leaders and activists because of their legitimate democratic activities are serious violations of the ILO Convention 87 on freedom of association and Convention 98 on collective bargaining, both ratified by your country.

Along with EI, the ITUC calls your Government to ensure the unconditional release of all unionists detained in connection with their legitimate trade union activities and a fair judicial process; and that Turkey abides by its international obligations to secure the human and trade union rights and freedoms of its workers.

I sincerely trust that your Government will act swiftly on these requests.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. Ripert', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary

Copy to:

- Ambassador Jean-Maurice Ripert, Head of Delegation of the European Union to Turkey
- Ambassador Selim Yenel, Permanent Delegate of Turkey to the EU
- Umit Deniz Efendioglu, Director, ILO office for Ankara
- Stefan Füller, EU Commissioner for Enlargement