

**Ayuba Wabba**

President  
Président  
Präsident  
Presidente

**Sharan Burrow**

General Secretary  
Secrétaire générale  
Generalsekretärin  
Secretaria General

**His Excellency**

**President Republic of Arab Republic of Egypt  
Abdelfatah El-Sisi**

**Email:**[media.office8@op.gov.eg](mailto:media.office8@op.gov.eg);  
[questions@cabinet.gov.eg](mailto:questions@cabinet.gov.eg);  
[primemin@idsc.gov.eg](mailto:primemin@idsc.gov.eg);  
[feedback@sis.gov.eg](mailto:feedback@sis.gov.eg);

**Lex/MT/PKD**

**30 August 2022**

Your Excellency,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) which represents over 200 million workers in 163 countries and territories with 332 national affiliates including our affiliate Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC) and the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), express our deepest concerns regarding the serious and systematic violation of human and trade union rights in Egypt.

The ITUC's annual Global Rights Index<sup>1</sup> has rated the country as one of the 10 worst countries in the world for working people.

Workers and their representatives in Egypt live under constant intimidation and continued repression for their union activities. Workers are deprived of their basic rights and freedoms at work, while many independent trade unions remain un-registered after their arbitrary dissolution in 2018. Anti-trade union discrimination is rife with termination of union and worker leaders for their trade union activities.

The legislative amendments made by Law No. 142 of 2019, remains incomplete, and despite the issuance of Law No. 213 of 2017, the current legal framework continues to impose obstacles to the registration and functioning of trade unions, including their right to form independent trade union organisations, draft their own constitutions, and manage their activities.

We are extremely concerned that the authorities still impose excessive registration requirements, and we regret to observe that since the last discussion that took place at the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) on the lack of compliance with ILO Convention No. 87<sup>2</sup>, no tangible progress was made by the Government in this regard.

We take this opportunity to remind you that during the 108th ILC session in 2019, the Committee on the Application of Standards called upon the Government: -“... to ensure that there are no obstacles to the registration of trade unions, in law and practice, in conformity with the Convention...”; and also to “...act expeditiously to process pending applications for trade union registration...”.

Unfortunately, your government did not carry out any of those recommendations and continues to deprive Egyptian workers of their rights under Conventions No. 87 and No. 98. The law continues to excessively regulate the exercise of the right to strike such that the full exercise of this right in practice has lost all meaning.

---

<sup>1</sup> [ITUC- Global Rights Index 2022](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Individual Case \(CAS\) - Discussion: 2019, Publication: 108th ILC session \(2019\)](#)

Trade unions established by employees in government departments are victims of anti-union discrimination. Civil servants have been excluded from the Labour Law and are unable to engage in collective bargaining. In this regard, the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR)<sup>3</sup> **requested the Government, “...in consultation with the social partners to take the necessary measures, for example, by revising Act No. 81 or by extending the scope of the Labour Code, to ensure that civil servants not engaged in the administration of the State have an effective framework in which they may engage in collective negotiations over their working and employment conditions through the trade union of their choice...”**. Again, there has been no progress in this regard.

On the contrary, there is a systematic violation of the right of Egyptian workers to freely choose their own representatives. This was also highlighted by the CEACR<sup>4</sup> noting that “... legislative provisions which regulate in detail the internal functioning of workers’ and employers’ organisations pose a serious risk of interference which is incompatible with the Convention...”.

We also note with serious concern that the Bills which have social and labour implications such as the Social Security and Pensions Bill was approved without any involvement from independent trade unions and the new labour bill is under discussion without any consultation with social partners. This amounts to a serious violation of the principle of freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining.

We remain deeply concerned with the state of respect for human rights and civil liberties in Egypt.

We note that during the 46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council<sup>5</sup> in 2021, members drew attention to restrictions on freedom of expression and the right to peaceful assembly, the constraints on democracy and space for civil society and political opposition including applying terrorism legislation against those exercising civil liberties. This is unacceptable.

The government continues to harass, intimidate, arrest, detain and prosecute rights activists, peaceful protesters, journalists, academics, artists, politicians, and lawyers.

In an effort to legalise attacks against the exercise of civil liberties and human rights, on 1 August 2021, President Al-Sisi approved legislation which allows public administrations to dismiss any civil servant who “harm public services or the economic interests of the state”. This legislation, as well as other terrorism legislation with wide scope, will also have a chilling effect on the take up and exercise of the right to freedom of association, peaceful assembly, expression, speech and opinion which which are enabling rights and are fundamental to the exercise of other rights.

On 23 November 2021, President Al-Sisi ratified amendments which codified and cemented a permanent state of emergency in Egypt, allowing more civilians to be referred to military courts, eroding further guarantees to a fair trial. We deplore this action by the President.

These violations of human and labour rights have impacted the social and economic lives of many trade unionists and other human rights activities, for example:

- on 11 May 2021, the Alexandria Spinning and Weaving Company refused to allow Ashraf Nassef, head of the workers’ trade union committee, and Faraj Al-Najjar, the union’s treasurer, to enter the company to speak to their members. This followed an incident on 4 March 2021 when management transferred seven members of the company’s union committee from their technical jobs to administrative security because of their union activities. The seven trade union members were Faraj Saeed, vice chairman of the trade union committee; Mahmoud Ibrahim El-Gohari, treasurer of the trade union committee; Mohamed Al-Masry, board member; Mohamed

<sup>3</sup> [Observation \(CEACR\) - adopted 2021, published 110th ILC session \(2022\)](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Observation \(CEACR\) - adopted 2020, published 109th ILC session \(2021\)](#)

<sup>5</sup> [46th session of the United Nations Human Rights Council General Debate Item 4: Human Rights Situations that require the Council’s attention Joint Statement on Egypt 12 March 2021](#). 31 states: Finland, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, France, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Montenegro, the Netherlands, North Macedonia, New Zealand, Norway, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States of America

Mohamed Ibrahim, assistant treasurer; Mohamed Youssef, board member; Magdy Marei, board member; and Tariq Bakr, board member.

- the arrest of trade unionist Abdel-Wahab Radwan, vice chairman of the Syndicate Committee of Public Transport Authority Employees in May 2021 because of his trade union activities. He remains in pretrial detention pending the hearing of his case. He was charged with “being a member of a terrorist group and misusing social media”.
- the mass dismissal of about 64 workers by Lord International Co., a razor blade manufacturer, between 1 August and 12 September 2021 for taking part in a strike action. About 2,000 workers took part in a strike to demand the minimum wage, permanent contracts and an increase in their shift allowance. In the negotiations brokered by representatives of the Ministry of Manpower, Lord’s management agreed verbally to raise their bottom-line wage. The workers called off the strike on 1 August, but the company went ahead with the mass dismissals and further referred 84 workers for internal investigation, accusing them of taking part in an illegal strike, incitement to violence, and causing severe material and moral damage. The workers were forced to sign warnings issued that they would be dismissed if they undertook similar action in future.
- The arrest by the security forces of three workers of Universal for Home and Electrical Appliances on 28 September 2021 for participating in a strike over delayed wage.
- We also recall the unresolved murder of Giulio Regeni, the Cambridge University PhD student who was murdered by the Egyptian security forces in Cairo while carrying out research with independent trade unions in 2016.

We note with concern the news that in 2020, Egypt recorded a more than threefold increase in executions, surpassing Saudi Arabia and becoming the third country in the world with the most executions during that year. We also note reports that Egypt continues to escalate its use of the death penalty and executions, in many cases following unfair proceedings and mass trials.

The brazen discrimination and harassment of independent trade unions is expected to escalate with the recent appointment of the Minister of Manpower who is the President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation – Mr. Hassan Mohammed Hassan Shehata and further undermining the exercise of genuine trade union rights. The appointment of Mr. Hassan Mohammed to the Ministry of Manpower while he retains his position as president of the government controlled ETUF is a throwback to a dangerous past for the trade union movement characterised by totalitarianism, dictatorship, lack of democracy and lack of respect for freedom of association and the genuine representation of the interests and rights of the workers of Egypt.

For that reason and considering the seriousness of the violations of freedom of association faced by workers, The ITUC is calling on you President Al-Sisi and your government to comply with Egypt’s obligations under international human rights and labour standards without delay and to immediately release all those arrested for exercising their civil liberties including trade unionists and journalists. The government must hold to account all those responsible for human and labour rights violations including those in the security forces.

The ITUC remains available to engage with your government to constructively contribute to ensuring effective compliance with your obligations under ILO Convention 87 and 98 and to ensure that there is an atmosphere conducive to the exercise of civil liberties without which human and trade union rights cannot be meaningfully exercised.

Yours sincerely,



General Secretary