



11 February 2020

**Mr. Guy Ryder**  
Director-General  
International Labour Organization (ILO)  
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## Expressing great concern over increasing violation of fundamental labour rights in Algeria

Dear Mr. Director General,

On October 4 last year, we wrote to draw your attention to the deteriorating situation with respect to trade union and democratic rights in Algeria. Unfortunately, the situation has continued to deteriorate as the government systematically harasses, imprisons and threatens independent trade union leaders and members. Despite the recommendations of the Committee on the Application of Standards following the ILO's High Level Mission to Algeria last year, trade union activity is now effectively criminalized. Independent trade unions cannot carry out their functions without victimization and harsh reprisals.

Trade unionists now face a comprehensive dual-track repression. They are repressed for seeking to exercise the basic right to freedom of association set out in Conventions of the ILO, and persecuted for their participation in the mass democracy movement which has continued since February of last year.

For many consecutive years, the ILO has been urging the government of Algeria to register the independent trade union confederation CGATA. On December 4, 2019, police sealed the Algiers offices of CGATA, ostensibly for carrying out 'unauthorized activities', according to the administrative order. The CGATA headquarters is also the office of SNAPAP.

Raouf Mellal, president of SNATEG, the independent union of workers in the public gas and electricity company SONELGAZ, as well as the national confederation COSYFOP, continues to face new punitive charges, most recently a defamation lawsuit filed against him by the Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security in retaliation for having filed complaints against the government at the ILO on behalf of SNATEG. In November he was condemned to 6 month's imprisonment and financial penalties. The government has not rescinded the farcical 'self-dissolution' of SNATEG as recommended by the ILO. On February 5, police closed the COSYFOP/SNATEG headquarters in Algeria, forbidding all entry.

Kaddour Chouicha, president of the independent union of higher education workers SESS, and member of the executive committee of CGATA, was arrested and immediately sentenced

to one year's imprisonment on December 10 - International Human Rights Day - for criticizing the military and civil authorities. Provisionally released after one month, he was rearrested on January 14, released the following day, and faces a review of his sentence later in February.

Union activist Ibrahim Daouadji was arrested on October 12 on similar charges and remains in prison. He was arrested together with his 3-year-old son, who was only released after lawyers intervened.

Rym Kadri of the COSYFOP-affiliated education workers was arrested on November 24 for her participation in a sit-in demanding the release of political prisoners. Released after 4 days, she remains subject to strict legal and police controls.

Hamza Kherroubi, president of the COSYFOP-affiliated union of nurses' assistants, was arrested in December for his civic engagement and support for the democracy movement, charged with 'incitement' and sentenced to a year in prison. Provisionally released due to his medical condition, he was again placed in police detention on January 21.

Trade union activists not yet behind bars or subject to strict police supervision are at imminent risk of being arrested as the authorities seek to destroy the democracy movement. Union offices and activists are under continuous police surveillance.

Algerian rights defenders have documented the cases of hundreds of civic and political activists known to be in detention for having joined peaceful demonstrations or for criticizing the government on social media. Freedom of movement has been eliminated. At the same time, media close to the government continually attack independent trade unionists active in the democracy movement as foreign agents, preparing the ground for even harsher repression. The ILO has repeatedly affirmed the central importance of freedom of expression and freedom of assembly to the exercise of trade union rights.

Urgent intervention by the ILO is needed to ensure the physical safety and well-being of independent trade unionists in Algeria as well their continued activity in conformity with the repeated recommendations of the ILO.

We therefore, as a matter of urgency, call on the Director General to insist that the Algerian authorities;

- guarantee the unconditional release of all those arrested for attempting to exercise their trade union and civic rights and provide guarantees of their safety;
- immediately rescind the closures of the SNAPAP/CGATA and SNATEG/COSYFOP offices and cease the surveillance of trade union activity;
- take immediate measures to permit the registration and unhindered activity of the independent trade unions, in line with CAS conclusions.

We look forward to your prompt action and reply.

Yours sincerely,



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IndustriALL Global Union



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