

Geneva, 28 June 2014

Mr. Recep Tayyip Erdoğan
Prime Minister
Republic of Turkey
Ankara
Turkey

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IndustriALL Global Union Condemns the Decree of the Turkish Government to Postpone the Strike in Glass Sector

Dear Mr. Prime Minister Erdoğan,

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of IndustriALL Global Union representing more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing industries in 142 countries worldwide. We are proud of having the union of Kristal-İş as one of our members of our large global union family.

IndustriALL Global Union is outraged to hear that your government has postponed, in reality banned, the strike that Kristal-İş launched last week covering 5,800 union members at 10 factories of the glass-maker Sisecam in different cities in Turkey, alleging that it breaches “general health and national security,” which was published in the Official Gazette dated 27 June 2014.

We vehemently protest your decree, as it is completely unacceptable to IndustriALL Global Union and its affiliates worldwide. Your decree constitutes a clear attack on the right to strike, which is one of the fundamental workers’ rights, guaranteed by the conventions--which have been ratified by the Turkish government--and the jurisprudence of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

It is still fresh in our minds that the Turkish government has already unlawfully resorted to this kind of strike bans in the past both in the glass and rubber sectors. The State Council of the Republic of Turkey ruled that any strike in such manufacturing sectors can never be in breach of the “general health and national security.” In addition, the ILO’s Committee on Freedom of Association, in its conclusions over the filed complaint, ruled that the government of Turkey was in violation of freedom of association principles by suspending a strike in the sector on the grounds that the strike would be a threat to national security. I would like to recall you that the very same Committee noted with regret the decision of the Council of Ministers to suspend a strike on grounds of national security, without any actual relationship between the industries in question (tyre, glass, municipality services and state-run undertakings) and national security. Trying to find any relevance or link between the production of glass and the general health and national security defies common sense.

IndustriALL Global Union calls on the Turkish government to respect fundamental workers’ rights, and hence it refrains from restricting or seriously undermining the fundamental rights of workers. It is highly regrettable that the government is acting on the basis of the trade union legislation, which was put in place during the military coup d’état in 1980.

We call on the Turkish government to protect the rights of workers in line with international norms and standards instead of securing business interests. Furthermore, we strongly believe that your government must respond in the face of the industrial homicide in Soma, which killed 301 miners and left 432 children without fathers.

Please know that IndustriALL Global Union and its affiliates worldwide will continue to give full support to its affiliate Kristal-İş until justice is achieved. We will wage our support and solidarity with the striking glass workers, who are demanding proper wages and working conditions through a legitimate strike. Please further know that we will raise this matter, including filing a complaint, before the International Labor Organization.

I once again urge you to withdraw this decree to postpone the ongoing strike and instead create a proper environment whereby free collective bargaining negotiations can happen without interference.

I anticipate your quick reply.

Sincerely,



Jyrki Raina
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Union

CC:
Faruk Çelik, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Turkey
Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC
Ulrich Eckelmann, General Secretary, IndustriALL Europe
Bilal Çetintaş, General President, Kristal-İş