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Repression of DISK Leaders

Honourable Prime Minister Erdoğan

We received news that on 21 April, police violently intervened to break up a trade union meeting which was scheduled to plan for its annual May Day activities at Taksim Square. Indeed, police fired tear gas into the hotel where the meeting was taking place, causing some to be hospitalized. Twelve union officers, including presidents and general secretaries of DISK affiliated unions, were detained in the process. We are deeply concerned that this is just a preview of further repression to come.

Indeed, I was at Taksim Square for the 2013 May Day celebrations and saw peaceful demonstrators tear gassed, beaten and hosed by water cannons by the police. The brutality of the attack was shocking and indeed many trade unionists were injured, some badly.

As you know, the International Labour Organisation has underscored the importance of May Day to trade unions, and the right of trade unions to carry out activities on this day. As the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association has explained, “The right to organize public meetings and processions, particularly on the occasion of May Day, constitutes an important aspect of trade union rights.” Further, the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the Government of Turkey violated Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights, concerning the right to freedom of association, when it used repressive measures against members of DISK and KESK to prevent the 2008 May Day rally in Taksim Square.

On behalf of the 176 million members of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), I write to strongly condemn the police raid and call for your assurances that trade unions will be able to celebrate May Day on Taksim Square without any interference from the police.

Sincerely,



General Secretary