

ActNOW

Turkey: 69 trade union leaders to be tried for 'terrorism'

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A LabourStart campaign in partnership with International Trade Union Confederation, which represents 175 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 308 national affiliates.

Correction: It was earlier reported that all 69 trade unionists were women; this is not the case. We apologize for the error.

On 4 October, 69 leaders from Turkey's public sector union KESK, will stand trial on terrorism charges for merely engaging in trade union work. This is part of a clear strategy from the authorities to bring the union to its knees. While judicial harassment of unions, and in particular of KESK and its affiliates, has become endemic in Turkey over the past year or so, the court case against KESK has been dragging on for years.

The evidence held against those who stand trial is at best flimsy: participation in trade union events and activities (of which photos and videos are being kept on file as "proof"), attending demonstrations or press conferences, participating in strikes, printouts of anonymous reports, illegally tapped phone calls that merely concern trade union-related issues etc.. Of all 69 leaders of KESK who stand trial on 4 October, none has ever been involved in any action related to or resulting in any violence whatsoever. The ITUC, ETUC, EI, EPSU and others in the international labour movement are very concerned that they will be sent to prison as terrorists merely because they stand up for the rights of Turkish public sector workers, including those belonging to minority groups.

Letter

Dear Prime Minister,

On Thursday 4 October, 69 leaders of public sector union KESK will stand trial in Ankara. They are being charged with terrorism. The international labour movement is very worried that they are being tried because of their legitimate trade union work, especially as they also stand up for minority groups. While your country continues to fail to bring its labour legislation in line with international standards as set out by the European Union (EU) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the judicial harassment of trade unionists is becoming endemic. None of the individuals who stand trial next Thursday 4 October have ever been involved in any activity related to or resulting in any violence whatsoever, and there never has been any substantial evidence

against them. Under no circumstance can involvement in trade union activities be labelled as an act of terrorism or support to terrorism, which seems to be a deliberate strategy from your government to bring the union movement in Turkey to its knees, as part of an overall attempt to muzzle the entire opposition. We strongly urge you to refrain from attempting to destroy trade unions in Turkey. All of the 69 union leaders who stand trial on 4 October are there on trumped-up charges and they should all go free. Trade union rights are human rights!

Yours sincerely,

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