

Global unions to challenge legitimacy of Myanmar junta at ILC

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18 May, 2021. In solidarity with Myanmar's trade union movement, the Council of Global Unions has vowed to challenge the legitimacy of the Myanmar junta throughout the UN system, including in the upcoming 109th session of the International Labour Conference (ILC).

Since the coup d'état in early February, the military's bloody repression has killed more than 750 people participating in the civil disobedience movement. Around 3,000 elected representatives, activists, workers and students have been arbitrarily detained and tortured.

Speaking at a webinar on trade unions' fight for democracy in Myanmar on 12 May, International Trade Union Confederation general secretary Sharan Burrow said that global unions will put forward a resolution at the ILC in June to challenge the legitimacy of the junta in representing Myanmar.

In 1999, the ILC banned the military regime from participating in any ILO meeting due to the widespread use of forced labour by the regime. The sanction was lifted in 2012 after Myanmar's democratization process had started.

"We must take concrete action at the upcoming ILC. The military doesn't care about resolutions, but they fear sanctions. 20 years ago, after the ILO imposed sanctions on Myanmar, the military started to change its tune,"

said Maung Maung, president of Confederation of Trade Unions in Myanmar (CTUM).

The crimes against humanity have triggered solidarity actions from international actors, including targeted government sanctions against businesses linked to the military, withdrawal of investment of multinational companies, solidarity campaigns and donations, and the mediation of ASEAN countries by releasing a five-point consensus.

The Council of Global Unions (CGU) urges unions around the world to pressure individual governments to recognize Myanmar's National Unity Government, lend support to the struggle by donating to the CGU strike fund and demand multinationals to join the coordinated economic sanctions.

Valter Sanches, IndustriALL Global Union general secretary, said:

"We will stand with our brothers and sisters in Myanmar until we win. IndustriALL is putting pressure on multinational companies to put an end to business links to the junta, particularly those in the oil and gas, garment and textile sectors. This illegitimate government must be held accountable for these serious crimes against humanity and foreign companies should not entail any form of cooperation with it."

The United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Tom Andrews called on the international community and trade unions to step up actions, saying it is crucial to organize a movement outside Myanmar and take bold action to demand comprehensive sanctions against the regime.

The Council of Global Unions (CGU)

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- IndustriALL. 18 May, 2021:
<http://www.industriall-union.org/global-unions-to-challenge-legitimacy-of-myanmar-junta-at-ilc>