

A LabourStart Campaign

Turkey: Unjust prison sentence on trade union activists

Friday 16 December 2011, by [LabourStart](#) (Date first published: 15 December 2011).

A LabourStart Campaign in partnership with the Education International, the world's largest federation of unions, representing thirty million education employees in about four hundred organisations in one hundred and seventy countries and territories, across the globe.

Education International (EI) calls on you to condemn the prison sentences imposed on 25 Turkish trade unionists from the teacher union Egitim Sen and the Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK).

The 25 members of Egitim Sen and KESK were condemned to 6 years and 5 months prison by the Izmir High Court for engaging in what would be regarded elsewhere as legitimate trade union activities. Egitim Sen lawyers are going to appeal to the upper court. 6 other defendants have been acquitted.

The 25 trade unionists were amongst the 31 unionists charged since November 2009 for allegedly belonging to an "illegal" Kurdish organisation. They have been labelled as "terrorists" based on possession of books that can be found in any bookstore in Turkey, participation in union meetings and other things which have nothing whatsoever to do with criminal activity.

In a report on the trial issued in November at the request of EI, the International Centre for Trade Union Rights (ICTUR) expressed "significant concerns regarding the procedural aspects of the prosecution, both in terms of delay, and the failure of the prosecution to shape the evidence given to it by the police into any meaningful set of allegations or charges". The report concludes that freedom of association in Turkey is being severely undermined and recommends that the Court acquit the defendants in the event that the prosecution fails to specifically detail its case against the defendants, in accordance with the interpretation of Convention rights by the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association.

Gabriela Knaul, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Independence of Judges and Lawyers, declared recently that "the far too close relationship between judges and prosecutors [in Turkey] raises concerns about the respect of the principles of impartiality and equality of arms". International observers noted this proximity between the court and the prosecution on several occasions during the Egitim Sen/KESK trial.

Furthermore, after it appeared as if judges were going to give the defendants favourable decisions, two of the judges were unjustifiably replaced just before the final hearing. According to Egitim Sen,

this provided a majority against the trade unionists in spite of the opposition of the lead judge. This fact raises serious concerns about the independence and objectivity of the court.

Letter

To Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President Abdullah Gül, Minister of Justice Sadullah Ergin
:

I am writing to you to condemn the prison sentences imposed on 25 Turkish trade unionists from the teacher union Egitim Sen and the Confederation of Public Employees' Unions (KESK).

The 25 members of Egitim Sen and KESK were condemned to 6 years and 5 months prison by the Izmir High Court for engaging in what would be regarded elsewhere as legitimate trade union activities.

They have been labelled as 'terrorists' based on possession of books that can be found in any bookstore in Turkey, participation in union meetings and other things which have nothing whatsoever to do with criminal activity.

The imposition of such unjust sentences on trade union activists is an affront to democracy and a breach of the human and trade union rights of the individuals concerned.

You can help! Type in your name and email address, then click on 'Send Message' on the bottom of this page.

http://www.labourstart.org/cgi-bin/solidarityforever/show_campaign.cgi?c=1202
