

ITUC-Africa statement on the situation of Libya

The African regional organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) is deeply concerned about the deepening political crisis in Libya and alarmingly shocked about the violent attacks on civilians and protesters. Reports reaching us suggest that security agents, pro-government supporters, militia and mercenaries have orchestrated violent and repressive attacks on street protesters calling for democratic transition. These ceaseless attacks have led to the death of more than six hundred persons and triple of that figure injured. ITUC-Africa strongly condemns these attacks and calls for the immediate cease to these attacks. The shedding of innocent and defence protesters and citizens must stop now!

ITUC-Africa notes that these attacks increased in pace, scope and severity immediately after the inciting television broadcast of President Moammar Kadhafi where he expressed willingness and readiness to “fight till the last blood, last man, last woman and last bullet” rather than accede to the demands of the protesters to commit to legitimate and genuine democratic transition. ITUC-Africa regrets that such tone and words from the Libyan leader are not in the interest of peace and peaceful resolution to the present political crisis. Rather, they are inciting, an act of provocation and largely un-conciliatory expression capable of escalating the crisis. It is not surprising therefore to see that pro-government supports have rightly, but unfortunately, interpreted the broadcast as approval for further unleashing of repressive and violent attacks on peaceful and defenceless workers, citizens and protesters.

Similarly, thousands of migrant and foreign workers, including Libyans are daily fleeing the country to safety. Ten thousand persons have been internally displaced and many more are hapless as their security cannot be guaranteed. The situation is worse for citizens given that it is presently very cold in the country and region at this time of the year. There is a gradual development of humanitarian crises from these violent reactions to a supposedly peaceful protest. Reports suggest that over three thousand migrants have fled to Italy, Tunisia and Egypt causing worrying concerns by the governments of these countries.

ITUC-Africa strongly supports the universal rights of Libyans and all people to enjoy the freedoms of peaceful assembly, free speech and the ability to determine their own destiny. These are inalienable rights that are the bulwark of civil liberty and democracy. We call on the Libyan government to respect these rights, including the right to life and protection of persons and properties.

ITUC-Africa further demands that persons responsible for these violent attacks should be investigated, identified, prosecuted and sanctioned accordingly. ITUC-Africa also calls on the international community to take immediate actions that will halt the attacks, secure adequate medical attention for the injured and contribute to the peaceful resolution of the crisis.

Finally, ITUC-Africa urges the Libyan government to immediately take steps to address the legitimate demands of the population, including through national dialogue.

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ITUC-Africa