

**Tenth European Regional Meeting**  
**Istanbul – Turkey**  
(2-5 October 2017)

**Workers' Group Statement - 24 March 2017**

**ILO Governing Body**

It is with regret that we have to inform you of our concerns regarding the deteriorating conditions in Turkey.

The ITUC and the ETUC consider the events of the past months to be extremely disturbing.

Since 2015 there may have been more than 350 deaths and hundreds more injured in attacks in public places.

With the attempted Coup in July 2016, some 260 more people were killed and around 2000 injured. No coup can be supported and indeed it was condemned by all of us.

However, the political oppression and the derogation of human rights that has followed cannot be accepted either. While these were first targeted against persons supposedly associated with the coup attempt, soon after, drastic measures were extended far beyond.

It is estimated that at least 125,000 public servants have been dismissed by emergency decree, including judges, academics and teachers. 1,401 NGOs and 123 foundations have been shut down.

These measures have been considered as excessive by regional and international human rights bodies. The Venice Commission of the Council of Europe has developed a report on the emergency decrees and came up with the following key concerns:

- The Government is de facto legislating without any control by the Parliament or the Constitutional Court;
- Measures taken are of permanent nature, beyond a temporary state of emergency;
- Emergency powers are implemented through ad hominem legislation;
- Due process rights of dismissed public servants and dissolved organisations have been removed by decree laws;
- There is a loose definition of “terrorist” organisation and undue penalization of family members of alleged terrorists;
- Pre-trial detentions without judicial control increased to 30 days and limitations on the right to access to a lawyer; and
- Protection against ill-treatment of detainees have been removed.

Turkey imprisoned more journalists than any other country in the world in 2016. It is estimated that 148 journalists and media workers are currently in jail. By December 2016, 140 media outlets and 29 publishing houses had been shut down via emergency decree, leaving more than 2,500 media workers and journalists unemployed.

Freedom of association has been stripped away with arrests and imprisonment of union members taking part in protests, speaking out on social media or campaigning against the anti-democratic measures inherent in the referendum. Thousands of dismissals, house raids on union leaders and even armed attack on union leaders represents everyday risks for trade unionists.

The UN Special Rapporteur on Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment found that torture and other forms of ill-treatment seem to have been widespread in the days and weeks following the failed coup, particularly at the time of the apprehension and during initial detention in police or gendarmerie lock-ups as well as in unofficial detention locations.

The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has been refused access to investigate serious allegations of human rights abuses since May 2016. A report prepared remotely by the Office of the High Commissioner which was published this month revealed that security operations carried out in southeast Turkey resulted in the displacement of up to half a million people in the period between July 2015 and December 2016.

The report documented accounts of torture, enforced disappearances, incitement to hatred, prevention of access to emergency medical care, food, water and livelihoods, and violence against women, and the expropriation of land, in some regions of up to 100 per cent.

The High Commissioner expressed particular concern over the lack of credible investigations “into hundreds of alleged unlawful killings, including women and children” given that “not a single suspect was apprehended and not a single individual was prosecuted”.

On 24 November 2016, the European Parliament adopted a resolution “strongly condemning the disproportionate repressive measures taken in Turkey”.

In light of this situation, the two organisations propose that the ILO Regional European Meeting be postponed.

Our understanding is that our government and employer counterparts stick to the decision made by the Governing Body to organize the European Regional Meeting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> of October of this year in Istanbul.

We think it is fair to inform you that we will now consult European unions with a view to deciding on the participation of the workers to this meeting. Thank you.