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Date
October 4, 2012

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Honourable Excellency,

Re: Request for a meeting on trade union rights in Turkey

The FNV, the largest Dutch confederation of trade unions, Abvakabo FNV and the Algemene Onderwijsbond FNV, the largest public and education sector unions in the Netherlands, have been informed by their European and international organisations, European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), Public Services International (PSI), Education International (EI) and European Federation of Public Services Unions (EPSU) about the continued detention of 69 trade union leaders in Turkey. FNV, Abvakabo FNV and AOb are joining the international trade union movement in expressing their concern about the arrest and detention of these leaders of the Confederation of Public Sector Workers' Union (KESK) and its affiliated unions. FNV, Abvakabo FNV and AOb are requesting the opportunity to discuss these concerns in a personal meeting with you.

On October 4th 15 female trade union leaders will stand trial in Ankara and we are worried about the protection of their trade union and legal rights. These hearings in court have been preceded by a series of serious harassments, including long detentions. As far as we know there is no legal basis for their arrest. In all cases the evidence against those who are being detained does not reveal any link with violence. Normal trade union activities like the attendance of trade union meetings, and participation in demonstrations and press conferences have been used as evidence against them. The trade unionists standing for trial on October 4th in our view are committed trade

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leaders standing up for the rights of Turkish public sector workers, including those belonging to minority groups.

Turkey, in applying for European Union membership has committed to comply with European and international law regarding trade union and collective rights, such as:

The Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, especially article 12 which declares: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association at all levels, in particular in political, trade union and civic matters, which implies the right of everyone to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his or her interests."*

The European Convention on Human Rights, especially article 11 which declares: *"Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and to freedom of association with others, including the right to form and to join trade unions for the protection of his interests."*

The ILO Convention, Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87), especially article 11 which declares: *"Each Member of the International Labour Organisation for which this Convention is in force undertakes to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure that workers and employers may exercise freely the right to organise."*

In the mean time Turkey continues to fail to bring its legislation in line with the international standards as set out by the European Union and the ILO. The much contested Law Nr. 4688 (on Public Servants' Trade Unions) has, after years of insistence from the ILO, been amended. However, these amendments do not address the core issues and leave hundreds of thousands of public sector workers without adequate trade union rights.

We would appreciate the opportunity to clarify our views in a personal meeting with you and be informed by you on recent developments with respect to trade union rights in Turkey within the shortest possible term.

Thank you for considering our request and awaiting your reply.

Also on behalf of
Ms Corrie van Brenk, President Abvakabo FNV
Mr Walter Dresscher, President Algemene Onderwijsbond

Yours sincerely,



Mr Ton Heerts
President FNV