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# Arab Trade Union Rights

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## Adopted Agreements and Conventions

- ILO Convention 87 on "Freedom of Association and the right to organize": Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Kuwait, Libya, Mauritania, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.
- Convention No. 98 "Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining ": Algeria, Comoros, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.
- Convention 135 "Convention on the workers' representative": Algeria, Djibouti, Iraq, Jordan, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia, Yemen.
- Convention 151 "Convention on labour relations in the public service" **No Arab state signed this convention.**



## Adopted Agreements and Conventions

- Despite the ratification by some countries to guarantee freedom of association, the right to organize is not implemented in most of the Arab countries, some of them impose a single general or federal union for all trade unions in the country or one union per sector that can make agreements, interference by governments in internal trade union matters is widespread and registration of new unions refused. After the “Arab spring” we witnessed the emergence of independent trade unions in some countries, especially in Algeria, Egypt and Jordan, which are still under pressure and repression by the political authorities.



# Egypt

- After removal of the Muslim Brotherhood party from power in Egypt it was hoped that 2014 would be the year of freedom and democracy, but the opposite is true,
- The referendum on the constitution and presidential elections took place under Law No. 107/2013, which regulates public meetings and demonstrations, whereby the young leaders of the Revolution of January 2011 were arrested and put in prison . This law confiscates the right to demonstrate which is one of the key indicators of freedom.
- The year 2014 was the year of the assassination of trade union rights and the rehabilitation of the Egyptian General Federation of Trade Unions, which was affiliated to the Mubarak regime and is now enrolled in the new power structures.
- With the return of the old regime personnel, public sector enterprises started punishment of trade union leaders working there and especially those who had opened the files of corruption in these institutions.
- Three types of violations of trade union freedoms: the violation of legislation, authority intervention in the work of independent trade unions, violations in the field.



# Violation of legislation

- Failure to approve the trade union rights law, despite the promises made during the Revolution, and despite the signing by the Egyptian state ratifying ILO Conventions 87, and 98. Egypt was set on the list of violations at the International Labour Conference in 2008, 2010, 2013 and continues to be problematic.
- In Decree 39/2014, the law 35/1976 was amended to extend the law to put the trade association under their Authority until the adoption of a new trade union law.



# Recent violations

- Not giving a license for the real estate taxes trade union to organize a strike in August 2015
- Putting obstacles and media campaign against the call for a million meeting to oppose the Civil Service Law



# Separate violations

- The arrest of protestors in front of Telecommunications department
- The Nile Company for Spinning and Weaving disassociated itself from the application of the collective contract and refuses to increase pensions
- The break-in into the offices of the Independent Union of Railways by Kina company and threatening of the members of the Executive Council



# Algeria

There have been several attempts to kill the President of the union, Rachid Malawi, by cutting his car brakes, and many union members have been arrested. Union properties have also been destroyed by the state security agents working in the interest of the Algerian Government.

PSI continued to campaign for trade union rights in Algeria in support of SNAPAP, by mobilizing the European Parliament, the ILO, PSI affiliates and national trade union centres, to ensure that Rachid Malawi's dismissal by the Government of Algeria be withdrawn.

Rachid was reinstated by a decision of the court in December 2014 – which is a result of the continued struggle by SNAPAP/CGATA and PSI's campaign.





# Algeria

- Prevent a delegation of 96 trade unionists and civil society activists from crossing into Tunisia to attend the World Social Forum (2013)
- Forcing unionists from North Africa to leave Algeria to prevent them from attending the first forum for North Africa to fight unemployment and fragile employment.
- The expulsion of nine trade unionists from their work (March 2013) because of their call for strike
- The ongoing violations to The Independent National Union presented the public service (SNAPAP) and the independent Union of trade unions

# Tunisia

- After the Arab spring a new Constitution was adopted that is hailed as the most progressive one in the Arab region, including in relation to gender equality
- Trade unions were at the helm of the progressive alliance in the country, putting decent work, youth employment at the centre
- However, violence against trade union leaders and offices has been on-going, and the assassination of progressive leaders such as Chokri Belaid

# Jordan

- The weakness of employment opportunities and continued high unemployment rates
- Low wages with high price levels for goods and services
- Restrictions to the freedom to organize and collective bargaining
- Restrictions on freedom of association in the public sector. Despite the ratification of the Convention 87, freedom of association remains a major challenge for trade unions in Jordan
- Weak social protection for workers
- Abuses and violations to basic labour rights
- Restrictions on organizing foreign /immigrant workers



# Challenges facing women at the workplace

- Lack of compliance with labour laws and safety standards
- Discrimination and violence against women
- Inequity in wages between men and women and in benefits
- Lack of access to nurseries and kindergartens
- Lack of safe public transport



# Challenges facing women

- There is an urgent need for policy reform to drive the broader engagement of women, youth and vulnerable groups in the labour market
- Deeply rooted cultural perceptions around many technical and vocational occupations
- Lack of awareness on labour laws and social security entitlements



# Collective bargaining and Women's rights

- Collective agreements should have more specific provisions related to women and the protection of their rights
- Trade unions should have gender policies and budgets to implement them
- Representation by women in trade union bodies is essential to achieve this change, including access to capacity building



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# Thank You