

Trade Unions Storm Labor Ministry



Acting Labor Minister Reads Placards Photo Credit : Ben Ammi Kitson

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By : E. Orlind Cooper

Trade unions in Liberia gathered at the headquarters of the Ministry of Labor on UN Drive, carrying placards with varying inscriptions channeling messages to the Liberian government on workers' rights in the country.

The protest coincides with the 2016 International Labor Conference convened in Geneva, the Swiss capital. The global summit looks at safeguarding human rights in the

international supply chain; while the Government of Liberia is tramping on trade unions through the censorship. George Poe Williams of the National Health Workers Association of Liberia



PSI Staff handing the Petition to ILO Photo Credit : E. Orlind Cooper

(NAHWAL) accused the Government of refusing to “grant NAHWAL its union certificate of recognition and the suspension of the Collective Bargaining Agreement of the RIA workers union”. Poe Williams read a joint statement crafted by trade unions under the banner of Public Services International (PSI) Affiliates. The trade unions include National Health Workers’ Association of Liberia (NAHWAL), National Private Sector Health Workers Union of Liberia

(NPSHWUL), the Liberian Union of Non Academic Staff and Teachers (LUNAST) and the National Trade Union of Public Service and Allied Workers (NTUPAW). Others are Roberts International Airport Workers’ Union (RIAWU), National Teachers’ Association of Liberia (NTAL) and the Civil Society and Trade Union Institutions of Liberia (CTIL).

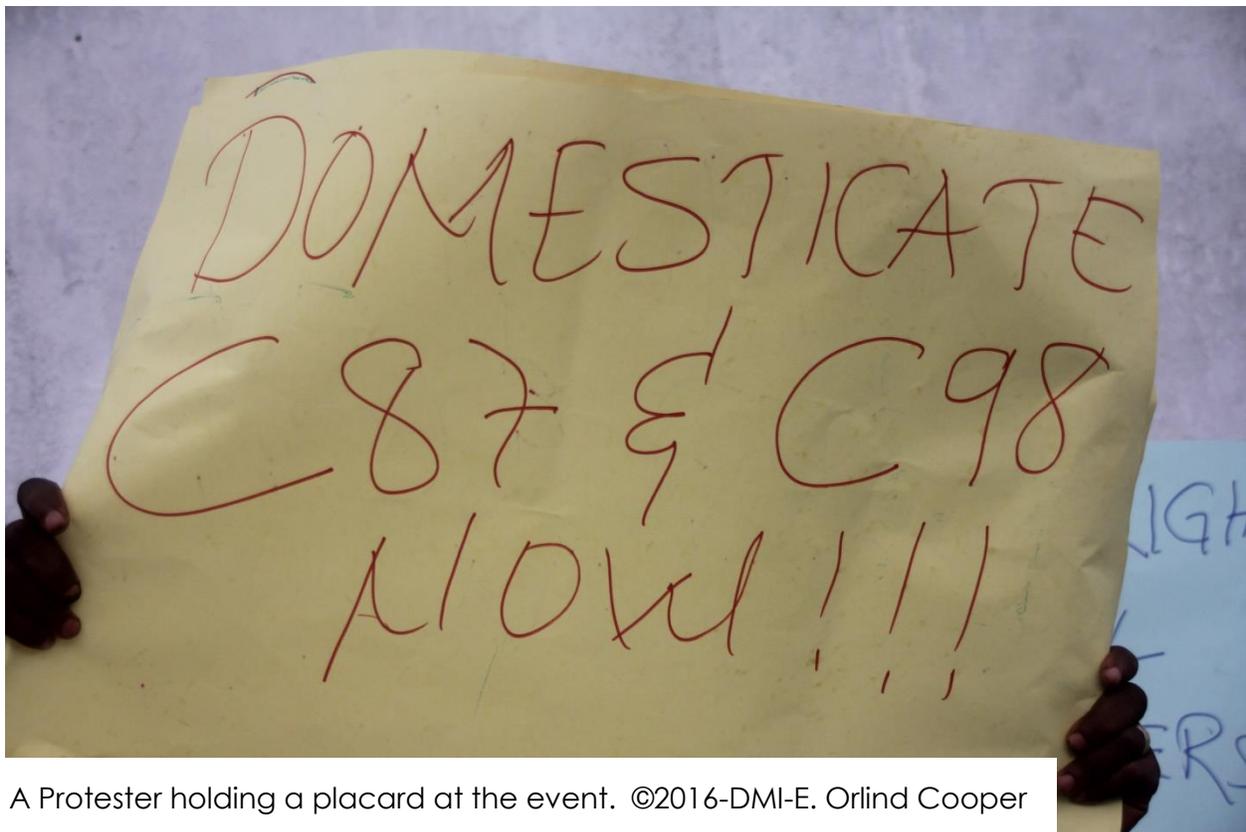
Contrary to the fact that the government has ratified the ILO conventions C87 and C98, it refuses to put these international regulations into practice and has made it illegal for public servants to get organised and form or join a union who represents their rights.

“Although the constitution guarantees the right to association and specifically refers to trade unions, the government had instituted two different labour laws” Poe Williams alleges; citing “the Decent

Work Act for private and the Civil Order for the public sector, denying public servants the international and constitutional right to organise themselves into unions."

The trade unions hailed the Government of Liberia for ratifying the ILO conventions C87 and C98, but frowned on its refusal to put these international regulations into practice and have made it illegal for public servants to get organized and form or join a union that

Service Standing represents their rights. "Contrary to the fact that the government has ratified the ILO conventions C87 and C98, it refuses to put these international regulations into practice and has made it illegal for public servants to get organized and form or join a union who represents their rights". ILO Convention C87 (1948, Entry into force: 04 July 1950) calls for Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize.



A Protester holding a placard at the event. ©2016-DMI-E. Orind Cooper

There have been dismissals of leaders of public service trade unions. The statement signed by the Unions catalogued union leaders recently dismissed by the Government of Liberia; "workers and human rights organisations, are

protesting against the anti-union behaviour of the Liberian government, more specifically the dismissal of union leaders George Poe Williams and Joseph Tamba of NAHWAL and Mellish P.G. Weh and Jayce W. Garniah of the RIAWU".

Receiving the petition from the protesters, Acting Labor Minister Augustine Williams noted that the unions are exercising their constitutional rights. "I said thank you from the onset because the Constitution guarantees this process," the Acting Minister

averred. He then furthered; "I assure you that the concerns raised here will be critically evaluated with your input," promising to work with the leadership of the unions to address the concerns enshrined.



Protesters holding placards at the MOL. Photo Credit : E. Orind Cooper

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