



Trade Union Rights

Purpose of brief:

- For EB-148 to note activities in the area of trade union rights.

Relates to:

- ✓ PoA Sections 2C (Public sector workers' rights) and 4 (PSI's plan to defend and extend workers' and union rights).

Background:

The protection of workers' and trade union rights is one of PSI's core activities. PSI publicly denounces violations of human and trade union rights in public services, and cooperates with affiliates and other national and international union organisations in case of serious violations.

Discussion:

ILC 2015 and the Right to Strike: During the International Labour Conference (ILC) in June 2015, PSI continued its work at the Committee on the Application of Standards (CAS) as in previous years and worked in coalition with its affiliates to speak both in the Committee itself, and the Workers' Group. PSI worked on the country cases of Cameroon, Algeria, Guatemala, Turkey, Korea, Swaziland, Spain, Italy, Venezuela and Mexico. Conclusions were reached on all cases, but the underlying conflict between employers and workers on the existence of the right to strike continues to hamper the functioning of the CAS and the ILO supervisory mechanisms. While employers were slammed by governments for their behaviour, who reiterated their position on the right to strike, the truce remains very fragile and unbalanced in PSI's view.

Also during the ILC, PSI organised a briefing session on labour protection, raising the issue of the Memorandum of Understanding the ILO has signed with the ISO, which means that the ILO has embarked *de facto* on outsourcing and privatisation of a standard on management systems for occupational health and safety. PSI holds the view that the proposed standard tramples on the ILO's mandate and that it should be set aside. On this issue PSI has recently prepared an information note to its affiliates in light of the *Draft International Standard (DIS) on occupational health and safety management systems*, that has to be voted by 12 May 2016 and that would eventually replace the British standard OHSAS 18001.

Activities since EB-147: PSI issued letters of support and solidarity to affiliates in El Salvador, Ecuador, Turkey, Egypt, Peru, Guatemala and Finland. PSI also launched a solidarity campaign for striking members of PCS at the National Gallery in London in cooperation with LabourStart.

In July 2015, the UK government published the Trade Union Bill, which contains wide-ranging measures designed to restrict the ability of unions and their members to organise collectively and take industrial action. PSI is extremely concerned and opposed to this Trade Union Bill which in our view will severely undermine fundamental human and trade union rights, such as freedom of association and the right to strike in the UK. Protest letters to the EU Commission, and submissions to the UK government were prepared.

On 14 September, PSI submitted an ACFO-drafted complaint on behalf of 230,000 Canadian federal public servants at the ILO headquarters in Geneva on violations on C87, C98, C151 and C154.

A regional report on trade union rights in the public sector in Africa and the MENA region was prepared for PSI's AFRECON conference.

On 19-20 September, PSI participated in the LabourStart Conference in Brussels, and on 5-6 October, in the FES Campaigning Conference in Berlin. On 1 October, PSI also participated in an international meeting on the right to strike organised by Amnesty International and ICTUR in London.

In 2016 protest and support letters and messages were sent to 13 countries, including (in chronological order) Turkey, Korea, Colombia, Greece, Algeria, Ukraine, Guinea, Pakistan, Morocco, Honduras, Egypt, India, Tunisia, as well as the ILO. Regarding Ecuador and Liberia, complaints were filed, jointly with affiliates, with the Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA).

In March, PSI also attended the 326th session of the ILO Governing Body and participated on the issues relating to the reform of the ILO Administrative Tribunal, as well as in the discussions relating to the Complaint concerning non-observance by Guatemala of ILO Convention 87, made by delegates to the ILC 2012 under article 26 of the ILO Constitution.

Budget implications: Budgeted within 2015 budget.

Next steps:

PSI is preparing a mission to Korea in coordination with other GUFs, considering the delicate situation in the country. As of February 2016, 15 trade unionists, including the President of KCTU and the Vice-President of KPTU, are in jail for carrying out lawful trade union activities. Also, more than 400 trade unionists have been summoned by the police for their participation in a demonstration in November 2015.

PSI, together with EPSU, is following closely the events in Turkey, where human and trade union rights violations have increased significantly with the escalation of the Syrian conflict. Affiliates have informed PSI of killings, intimidation and arrests of trade unionists in the South East of the country and of other similar attacks mostly directed at the Kurdish population. PSI-EPSU have addressed the Government twice to denounce this situation and demand the end of these violations.

In view of ILC 2016, PSI is participating in the preparatory meetings for the selection of cases for the CAS in all regions. PSI will propose for discussion – among others – three “priority countries”: Algeria (C87), Guatemala (C87) and Turkey (C87 and C98). PSI is also organizing an introductory session for its affiliates and two side events, one of them in relation to the migrants’ crisis in Europe.

<p>It is recommended that EB-148:</p> <p>1. NOTE activities in the area of trade union rights and further actions.</p>	<p>YES / NO</p>
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