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His Excellency Hosni Mubarak  
President of the Arab Republic of Egypt  
`Abdin Palace  
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Egypt

Via fax: +202-390-1998

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20 April 2007

### **EGYPT: Repression against the Centre for Trade Union and Worker Services**

Dear President,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents 168 million workers through its 304 national affiliated trade union centres in 153 countries and territories expresses its most serious concern about the recent cases of repression by your Government against the *Centre for Trade Union and Worker Services* (CTUWS), an independent civil society organization committed to defending trade union and other workers' rights in Egypt. We are particularly concerned about your Government's decision to shut down the CTUWS branch in Naj Hamadi (Qena Governorate, in Southern Egypt) and its intimidation of CTUWS staff in the Mahalla City branch office.

According to our sources, the CTUWS Branch of Naj Hamadi was shut down by Administrative Decision n° 44 of the year 2007, issued on Thursday 29 March 2007 by General Al Sherbeeney Hasheesh, Chairman of the City of Naj Hamadi. Subsequently, on 3 April 2007, an official from the Social Solidarity Regional Office (under the Ministry of Social Solidarity) entered the CTUWS branch in Mahalla to investigate the CTUWS' work and the nature of its activities. We understand he claimed to be under instructions to file a report on this subject with his Ministry.

The ITUC is very concerned by these incidents, targeted at an organisation which has earned itself much esteem in the international trade union movement for its active role in providing support to Egyptian workers struggling for the respect of fundamental labour standards in their country, particularly amongst vulnerable workers in the informal economy and women workers. We are also well aware of the CTUWS' relentless efforts to assist workers from many regions in defending their right to stand in trade union elections, particularly when they protested against refusals to issue them with union membership certificates, removal of their names from trade union electoral lists, threats and other acts aimed at preventing them for running in trade union elections.

We are further reliably informed about CTUWS' information work relating to the right to strike, as well as of its role, as a member of the *National Civil Society Alliance to Monitor the Elections* in assisting workers engaged in the monitoring of government bodies' activities, including the recent referendum on amendments to the Constitution. We note

that some of this work took place in electoral constituencies located in the Qena Governorate.

We note that, in the last few months, Egypt has witnessed workers' protest movements, including strikes, in a number of industries, particularly in the spinning and weaving sectors. The problems in these sectors have been openly acknowledged by your Government. It is thus all the more surprising that government bodies and officials have blamed the CTUWS for some of these strikes. Indeed, the organisation has repeatedly stated that, while defending the right of workers to resort to industrial action as an internationally-recognised right, it was firmly committed to promoting the spirit of social dialogue in order to avoid disturbances and troubles.

Mr. President, Egypt is a leader in the Arab world and your Government can be a role model in the Arab world as a protector of the right to freedom of association and other fundamental human rights, including freedom of assembly and expression. The right for the CTUWS to freely conduct its work to protect and advocate for workers rights is something that the Egyptian government should be eager to protect and could legitimately be proud of. This would only enhance Egypt's stature as a respected member of the community of nations, one that respects fundamental human rights and workers' rights enshrined in international conventions, including the relevant conventions of the International Labour Organisation.

On behalf of the ITUC, I urge you to issue instructions to the relevant governmental bodies to rescind the restrictions and other measures imposed on the CTUWS, as a positive sign of your Government's commitment to international labour and human rights.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary

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