



SHARAN BURROW
PRESIDENT
PRÉSIDENTE
PRÄSIDENTIN
PRESIDENTA

GUY RYDER
GENERAL SECRETARY
SECRÉTAIRE GÉNÉRAL
GENERALSEKRETÄR
SECRETARIO GENERAL

Senior General Than Shwe
Chairman of the State Peace and
Development Council
Pyinmana
Burma
myanmar@un.int

HTUR/SB

9 April 2009

Arrest of Trade Union Members and concern for their physical well-being

General Than Shwe,

We have received information whereby on April 1, 2009, five members of the Federation Trade Unions of Burma (FTUB) were arrested in their homes in Rangoon after returning from border areas where they had participated as delegates in the 1st National Congress of FTUB (an Associate Organisation of the ITUC).

The five members are likely being held in interrogation centers in the Rangoon area where we fear they may be tortured. These FTUB members have served as non-violent advocates and campaigners for workers' rights and the improvement of wages and working conditions for workers inside Burma. While the charges on which they were arrested have not been announced, the FTUB and the ITUC strongly condemn these unlawful arrests.

The FTUB members arrested on April 1 are the following:

1. U Zaw Myint Aung (49 years old, Teacher, South Okkalapa, Rangoon)
2. U Soe Oo (37 years old, Textile Factory Worker, Shwe Pyi Thar, Rangoon)
3. Maung Tun Nyein (22 years old, Worker, Shwe Hninsi Textile factory, Hlaing Thayar, Rangoon)
4. Ms. Khine Lin Myat (22 years old, Worker, UMH Textile factory)
5. Ms. Shwe Yi Nyunt (25 years old, Nurses Aide and Law Student, University of Western Rangoon, and Member, FTUB Women's Committee)

Furthermore, we understand that an unspecified number of family members of these five persons were also arrested, and these family members have been threatened and put under pressure in an effort by the authorities to compel cooperation from the five detained FTUB members.

The FTUB is recognised by the entire international trade union movement as a legitimate organisation, whose legitimate role is to defend workers' rights in Burma.

The FTUB's 1st National Congress was attended by the ITUC Deputy General Secretary and by trade union representatives from countries of ASEAN, Asia-Pacific, Europe and North America, and these arrests are an insult to both the international trade union movement, and to working people everywhere.

As is well known to you, and as has been publicly repeated by the International Labour Organisation, detaining and sentencing workers who exercise their right to freedom of association – for instance by attending and participating in union activities – is a clear violation of fundamental human rights and international labour standards.

We wholeheartedly condemn these arrests as a blatant violation of Burma's commitments to the ILO and in particular Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and the Right to Organize, ratified by Burma in 1955.

I urge you, General, to urgently instruct the relevant authorities to guarantee the well-being of all those arrested, to order the immediate and unconditional release of our colleagues, and to cease the intimidation and threats to the FTUB members' families.

Meanwhile, the ITUC, which represents more than 168 million members worldwide through its 311 affiliated organisations in 154 countries and territories, will call on its worldwide membership to support its call for their release and may refer the matter to the competent ILO supervisory mechanisms.

Sincerely,

General Secretary