

UNITED NATIONS
ECONOMIC
AND
SOCIAL COUNCIL



GENERAL

E/C.2/250

24 February 1950

ENGLISH

ORIGINAL: FRENCH

COUNCIL COMMITTEE ON
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Communication received by the Secretary-General from the

World Federation of Trade Unions

Distributed for their information to the members of the Council
in accordance with the provisions of rule 80, paragraph 1,
of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council

WORLD FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS

New York, 21 February 1950

The Secretary-General of
the United Nations

Sir:

On behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions, I have the honour to
transmit the enclosed document and to ask you to have it reproduced and circulated
I have the honour etc.

(signed) A. Diallo

Vice-Chairman

/INFORMATION

INFRINGEMENT OF TRADE UNION RIGHTS

The World Federation of Trade Unions has the honour to draw the attention of the Economic and Social Council to a number of further cases of infringement of trade union rights which show the deliberate and increasingly brutal determination of the reactionary forces of trusts and monopolies to destroy the resistance of organized labour against their policy of exploitation and depredation.

Italy

On 9 January 1950, nine workers, whose only offence was that they took part in a demonstration against the exploitation to which they were exposed, were killed by the police of Modena. The Italian Government and the police authorities of Modena were undoubtedly responsible for this outrage.

The above-mentioned events took place as a result of a lock-out ordered by Count Orsi Mangelli, owner of the United Foundries and the Maserati works. In October 1949, this industrialist had fixed new wage scales for piece work which resulted in a considerable reduction in the workers' incomes. At the same time the workers' trade union rights had been greatly restricted. The workers in the establishments concerned tried to use all possible methods of conciliation and to obtain satisfaction through negotiation. On 3 December, however, many letters of dismissal were sent out. The lock-out was proclaimed and the premises were occupied by the police. In view of these circumstances, the Modena trade unions proclaimed a general strike, which took place on 9 January. A meeting was to be held and had been authorized by the Prefect, Mr. Laura, after negotiations held on the morning of 9 January with a committee consisting of Senator Alberto Mario Pucci, Mrs. Montorsi and Mr. Marozzi of the Labour Board. The police, however, without any prior warning, opened fire some hours later on workers who were proceeding to the meeting place in good order and in small groups. Nine workers were thus

about the day policemen entered houses in search of workers.

These events clearly show the methods which the Italian Government wished to employ to silence the workers' protests against a policy of impoverishment, unemployment and unemployment.

In 1949, the Lebanese Government closed trade union premises and arrested many trade union leaders, including Mr. Mustafa El Arise, General

/Trade Union

Trade Union Federation of Lebanese workers and employees and a member of the Executive Board of W.F.T.U.

This new attack by the Government of Lebanon may be explained as follows: the Government is trying to paralyze the representative organization of workers at a time when it intends to amend the law on trade unions and to reduce by half the separation allowance hitherto paid to wage-earners. The World Federation of Trade Unions immediately asked the Lebanese Government to have the accused persons represented by a French counsel, Mr. Douzon, appointed by the International Association of Democratic Lawyers. The Lebanese Government did not reply to the request of the World Federation of Trade Unions for a visa for Mr. Douzon.

On 12 January 1950, the Beirut court of summary jurisdiction pronounced a verdict sentencing Mr. El Ariss to eighteen months' imprisonment, Mr. Helou and Mr. Boueri to one year's imprisonment and Mr. Esber Samn to six months' imprisonment. The above-mentioned court based its verdict, inter alia, on two orders issued in 1939 by the French High Commissioner's office and on an article of the Lebanese Penal Code, providing for the punishment of "any person in Lebanon who joins a political or social organization of an international character without the authorization of the Government".

We feel we should emphasize how contrary this provision is to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and to existing international agreements on trade union rights. Furthermore, the Lebanese Trade Union Federation has been affiliated to the World Federation of Trade Unions since 1945, and the Lebanese Government has never before considered such affiliation to be illegal. Finally, the sentence would appear to be all the more inadmissible since it is not one or several persons who belong to the World Federation of Trade Unions, but the Lebanese Trade Union Organization.

It would therefore seem essential for the United Nations to remind the Lebanese Government of the need to respect its most elementary international obligations.

Egypt

In June 1949 the Egyptian Council of State approved a Ministerial decision relating to the creation of trade unions. Under this decision the creation of any trade union must be previously approved by the Labour Bureau of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the activity of these unions must be carried on "in the common interest of the whole profession". According to this decision, the term /"profession" includes

"profession" includes both workers and employers.

Iran

Repressive measures against the trade union movement augmented considerably in this country during 1949. On the pretext of an attempt against the life of the Shah of Iran, the headquarters of the Central Council of the United Trade Unions of Iran was occupied, its property confiscated and the organization itself dissolved. Hundreds of active trade union members were arrested, summarily tried by court-martial and sentenced to penalties ranging from three to ten years' imprisonment.

A detailed analysis of the sentences pronounced by the courts-martial shows that no definite charge was brought against the trade unionists sentenced, except their trade union activities.

This is also demonstrated by the sentence pronounced on Mr. Reza Rousta, Secretary of the United Trade Unions, condemned to death in absentia and against whom no definite accusation was brought.

In this country, as in others, the Government, which is in the service of the employers and foreign imperialism is trying to stifle the workers' movement by describing its activities in defence of the workers' rights as "a subversive plot against domestic security and the independence of the country".

India

All through 1949 the movement to suppress trade unionism in this country has been coming to a climax. The various laws on public security current in each province of the country provide that any person disturbing or likely to disturb public order may be detained and arrested without trial and this for a practically unlimited period. These provisions, under which thousands of trade unionists have been arrested, are contrary to Article 9 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Thousands of workers have been arrested, many trade unions have been forced to cease their activities, their offices closed and their records confiscated.

The incidents in the town of Madura in August 1949 may serve as an example. The competent authorities having rejected the workers' request for an increase in wages, protests were raised by all the wage-earners in the town. As a consequence, the Government ordered the arrest of more than 1,000 workers, most of whom were cruelly tortured in prison. Militant workers were tortured to force them to take the side of the Government trade unions (INTUC). The headquarters of the
/trade unions were

trade unions were raided by the police, the furnishings destroyed and the records removed. These terrorist measures have been extended to other places: more than 1,400 workers have been arrested in the Coimbatore region, 300 to 400 in the Tinnevelley region, more than 200 in the North Arcot region etc. Thus, more than 4,000 workers were arrested in August alone. It should be added that the conditions in the prisons are terrible and that torture is regularly used there.

The Government is also trying by every means to hand over the offices of the AITUC to the INTUC. Thus, in April 1949 the head offices of the Union of Railway Workers of Southern India were seized and handed over, with all the printing materials contained therein, to the INTUC.

On the railways in Southern India the Government is forcing the workers to state directly to the administration which trade union they belong to. The authorities are thus hoping to turn away workers from the AITUC and to increase the strength of the INTUC. A large number of trade unions affiliated to the AITUC are unable to hold meetings owing to a Government ban. The regular conference of the Textile Workers' Union of Mettur in June 1949 was forbidden. A conference of the Hand Weavers' Union of Salem was prohibited in July 1949 and the meeting of the Central Executive Committee of Trade Unions in the district of Trichy was also forbidden in August 1949. It may also be pointed out that the trade union newspapers are usually prohibited and their circulation prevented. Finally, on 26 September 1949, nineteen trade unions and peasants' organizations were suppressed in the province of Madras. All the offices of trade unions affiliated to the AITUC in Madras have been closed down, which is a really Fascist measure taken against a trade union movement representing 300,000 organized workers in that province.

In conclusion, it appears that these various methods of violating trade union rights are equally intended to increase poverty, reduce wages and standards of living. The aim is to exploit the workers even more ruthlessly and that is why it is necessary to eliminate their resistance and forcibly break up their organizations which are growing ever more active, more powerful and more united.
