

## **The Trade Union Freedom Initiative**

The Egyptian trade union movement, since the confiscation of the Egyptian workers' right to form their unions with their free will, is struggling to regain this right ... the right of the Egyptian workers to establish independent and democratic trade unions capable of defending the workers' rights and improve their work conditions and circumstances ... unions which are subject only to the workers' will.

The Egyptian workers who were deprived for tens of years from the right of association and whose independent unions and trade union movement were jeopardized escalated their strikes during the past five years in unprecedented rates because, very simply, they lacked the presence of trade unions as a tool to express their interests and negotiate on them. The Egyptian workers were forced to sit-in and sleep with their families and children in the street in front of the People's Assembly for days and months looking for someone to hear their voice and requesting a meeting of the parliamentary Manpower Committee to consider their suspended issues and negotiate on them in order to reach solutions and agreements. The Egyptian workers withdrew confidence from the Egyptian Trade Union Federation, applied to stop their membership and tried in vain to stop cutting subscriptions off their monthly salaries. The Egyptian workers put the dissolution of their trade union committees (plant unions) on the top of their demands in every strike and protest movement. Those workers are the genuine party in the conflict. They are the owners of the right which nobody could waiver or compromise ... their right to establish independent trade unions.

Gaining victory for trade union freedoms and guarantee of the Egyptian workers' right to establish their independent trade unions cannot be attained without removal of all the legal barriers which restrict this right and prevent its exercise. They cannot be attained without the abolition of the infamous law on trade unions No. 35/1976 and its amendments and the adoption of the Law on Trade Union Freedoms which guarantees the right of association and encourages the formation of trade unions.

Adherence to the International Labour standards and respect of the Egyptian workers' right to form independent trade unions cannot be compromised because they are necessary for achieving social justice which, in turn, cannot be realized without enabling all social parties to express their interests and negotiate on them. Nor can it be attained without owning the necessary organizational tools for social negotiations, i.e. genuine independent trade unions.

Now, while the new People's Assembly (the Parliament) is getting ready to start its sessions within a few days, we call upon all the active powers in the labour movement to ask the new parliament to put on the top of its priorities the issuance of the draft Law on Trade Union Freedoms which, for the first time, was subject to widespread tripartite discussions in three successive sessions. Several amendments were made to the draft before it was sent to the Legislative Committee of the Cabinet of Ministers which approved the draft and referred it to the Military Council for issuance. But it remained there for four months and has not seen the light since then.

The accelerated events make it necessary to work together urgently and agree on the necessary measures to expedite the parliamentary discussion of the draft Law on Trade Union Freedoms and to issue it in order to secure the workers' rights to confront the serious situation which resulted from the previous regime's practices and led to the devastation of their rights.

**Let us work together to issue the Law on Trade Union Freedoms**

**Egyptian Democratic Labour Congress (EDLC)**

88 Kasr El Aini - First Floor Flat 7 – Cairo Tel: +202 27962564 / +2 01016303130

E-mail: [edlc.labourcongress@gmail.com](mailto:edlc.labourcongress@gmail.com)