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**Prince Salman bin Hamad Al Khalifa,  
Crown Prince of Bahrain**

17 October 2011

**Deteriorating Situation in Bahrain**

Your Royal Majesty,

The undersigned members of Global Unions, the coalition of international trade union organisations – which together represent about 200 million workers around the world - are deeply concerned about the current human and trade union rights situation in Bahrain.

Today, over 2,600 workers in both the public and private sectors have been dismissed, and hundred more have been suspended from public sector jobs. The government has failed to reinstate the vast majority of these workers and has presented no evidence to support recent claims that it has. Some of those few that have been reinstated have had to agree to unacceptable, indeed illegal, conditions to get their jobs back, including agreeing not to join the union. The dismissals have not yet stopped. Government workers, especially those in health, education and municipal sectors, continue to be suspended or fired for their actual or suspected participation in trade union and political activity earlier this year. Numerous trade union leaders are also now facing criminal prosecution.

Below are some of the most troubling cases:

At Gulf Air, the government is pursuing criminal charges against union leaders with the clear intent of undermining the union. Some 217 employees of the airline were also arbitrarily sacked. Although many have now been returned to work, we understand that they have not been reinstated in their original jobs, and union leaders have been excluded. These actions appear to be linked to previous attempts by the authorities to restructure the company, without having to given any consideration to the views of the workers and of their organisations.

At DHL, the government has started proceedings against several leaders and members of the DHL Trade Union who have been given notice to attend a court hearing on 26th October. They stand accused of violating national security.

Leaders of the Bahraini Teachers Association, namely Mahdi 'Issa Mahdi Abu Dheeb and Jalila al-Salman, the president and female vice-president, were sentenced to ten and three years' imprisonment respectively by the Bahrain's First Instance Court of National Security, a military tribunal. The Bahrain Teachers' Association was dissolved in April by the Ministry of Social Development.

At least 68 journalists working for two leading Bahraini newspapers, *Al Wasat* and *Al Bilad*, were singled out for sacking, arrests and charges for treason. Others were forced into exile in the on-going systematic harassment of independent media. In the meanwhile, senior journalist Mansour Al Jamry, editor-in-chief of *Al Wasat* newspaper is on trial along with three other senior staff charged with publishing false information about the police crackdown, a charge which carries a one-year prison sentence.

Today, six members of the GFBTU executive board remain dismissed as well as 44 members of the executive board of GFBTU-affiliated unions.

To make matters worse, the government recently unilaterally amended the trade union law in an obvious act of retaliation against the trade unions. The purpose of these amendments is clear – to further undermine the GFBTU and its affiliates and thereby eliminate an important voice for economic and social reform in Bahrain. The amendments prohibit the establishment of a general federation of labour, such as the GFTBU; empower the Minister of Labour to determine which union federation engages in national level bargaining and represents Bahraini

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www.imfmetal.org



**ITF**  
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**ITGLWF**  
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www.world-psi.org



**TUAC**  
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workers at international fora; and prohibit trade union leaders found guilty of charges that lead to the dissolution of executive councils or unions to run again for 5 years – an obvious effort to disqualify current leadership from holding office if convicted under the sham trials currently underway. An amendment to allow multiple unions and to prohibit unions established on the basis of religion, sect or race, while consistent with international law, we fear will be abused to deregister or undermine existing trade unions by falsely claiming they were formed on religious or sectarian lines.

Trade unions throughout the Arab World and beyond have declared their full solidarity with their brothers and sisters in the GFBTU and will be following developments carefully. We, the undersigned global union organisations and their member unions have offered our full solidarity at all levels. We are also ready to take up Bahraini workers' issues in international bodies such as the International Labour Organisation.

Global Unions urge the government to respect fundamental human and trade union rights. All workers wrongfully dismissed must be unconditionally reinstated, criminal charges dropped and legal reforms repealed. We also urge you to begin a serious process of reform and reconciliation which responds to the demands of Bahraini trade unions and civil society, including the full guarantee of free association and expression.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,



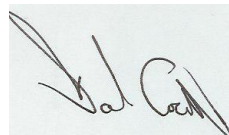
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Ambet Yuson,  
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*Building and Wood Workers International (BWI)*



Sharan Burrow,  
General Secretary,  
*International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC)*



David Cockroft,  
General Secretary,  
*International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF)*



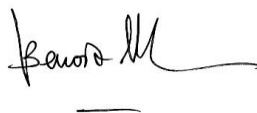
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