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**International Centre for Trade Union Rights**

*Centro Internacional para los Derechos Sindicales
Centre International pour les Droits Syndicaux*

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ICTUR was founded to
defend and extend trade union rights and
to raise awareness of these rights and their violations
around the world

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Attn:

Mauricio Macri
President of the Argentine Republic

CC:

Jorge Triaca, Minister of Labor, Employment and Social Security
Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the
rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

September 2018

Dear President,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to express concerns about recent police violence against a trade union demonstration in La Plata.

ICTUR understands that on 21 August, over 3000 workers of the Astilleros' Rio Santiago Shipyard held a demonstration to protest the suspension of their collective agreement and the threat of the shipyard's closure. The workers intended to bring their protest to the office of the governor María Eugenia Vidal, whom they accuse of manipulating local media to smear their union - the Asociación Trabajadores del Estado (ATE) Ensenada. It is alleged that a small number of protestors outside the office engaged in vandalism. Nevertheless the interventions by the police appear to have been severely disproportionate. It is understood that the workers were met with police firing tear gas, water cannons and rubber bullets, some five protestors were arrested and fifteen were injured. One protestor was reportedly run over by a police car and many peaceful demonstrators reported that they were victims of police violence.

ICTUR wishes to remind the government that the right of assembly is an essential element of workers' freedom of association, enshrined in the International Labour Organisation Convention 87, which Argentina has ratified. Following the interpretation of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association, the rights of workers can only be 'exercised in a climate that is free from violence... and it is for governments to ensure that this principle is respected' (*Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee of the Governing Body of the ILO*, Fifth Edition, 2006, paras. 42-45). The use of force by the authorities should only be resorted to in due proportion to the danger to law and order that the

authorities are attempting to control. During trade union demonstrations, this should be limited to cases of genuine necessity and, in cases of strike movements, to grave situations where law and order is seriously threatened (*ILO Digest*, para. 140, 150 and 644).

ICTUR calls on the government to undertake all necessary measures to ensure that it complies with Argentina's obligations under international law, and to protect the fundamental freedoms of workers to join and form unions and take action in defence of their interests. ICTUR will report these incidents in the journal *International Union Rights*, which was established in 1993, and which enjoys a readership in more than 100 countries.

Yours faithfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'D. Blackburn', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Blackburn, Director