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**International Centre for Trade Union Rights**

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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:**

**Alexis Tsipras**

**Prime Minister of the Hellenic Republic,  
1, Plateia Eleftherias, P.C. 105 53 Athens.  
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**CC:**

Clément Nyaletsossi Voule, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the  
rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association

Trade unions: OLME, DOE, ADEDY, PAME, GSEE

**January 2019**

Dear Prime Minister,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is seriously concerned  
about police violence directed at striking trade unionists in Greece.

ICTUR understands that in Athens on 11 and 14 January, riot police  
deploying teargas suppressed a peaceful demonstration of around 2000  
workers, organised by the Primary Teachers' Federation of Greece (DOE)  
and Greek Federation of Secondary State School Teachers (OLME). The  
teachers are currently striking to protest government plans to reform hiring  
procedures in the public sector. Police violence against the striking teachers  
left at least two protestors seriously injured; one member of OLME was  
left with burns after she was hit directly with a teargas canister, and  
subsequently hospitalised. Even Greece's Public Order Minister Olga  
Gerovassili reportedly condemned the actions of riot police as  
'unacceptable and politically dangerous', and accused police of  
indiscriminately attacking the protesters.

**The use of force against workers is an egregious violation of the  
principles of freedom of association, enshrined in the International  
Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98, and under Article 11 of  
the European Convention on Human Rights. As noted in previous  
correspondence, the ILO's Committee of Freedom of Association has  
since 2012 condemned the extensive deficit of social dialogue in Greece  
during the implementation of reforms that have significantly  
weakened collective bargaining in the country (See Case No 2820  
(Greece), Report No 365, November 2012. paras. 994-1002). This**

**recent escalation of violence against organised labour is an extremely alarming development.**

The ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association has precisely stated that 'the use of police for strike-breaking purposes is an infringement of trade union rights' and that 'the use of the forces of order during trade union demonstrations should be limited to cases of genuine necessity' (*Freedom of Association: Compilation of decisions of the Committee on Freedom of Association*, ILO, 6th Edition, 2018, paras. 229, 931). The CFA further notes that 'authorities should resort to calling in the police in a strike situation only if there is a genuine threat to public order', and that governments must take action 'to avoid the danger of excessive violence' (*Freedom of Association*, para. 935). To this end, 'governments should take measures to ensure that the competent authorities receive adequate instructions so as to eliminate the danger entailed by the use of excessive violence when controlling demonstrations which might result in a disturbance of the peace' (*Freedom of Association*, para. 217). The State's obligation to protect workers' freedom of association also clearly requires that 'all allegations of violence against workers who are organizing or otherwise defending workers' interests should be thoroughly investigated and full consideration should be given to any possible direct or indirect relation that the violent act may have with trade union activity' (*Freedom of Association*, para. 101).

**ICTUR calls on the government to promptly establish an independent investigation into the actions of the police and to provide remedy to the victims of police violence, as well as to take effective action to address workers' legitimate grievances. ICTUR further urges the government to take all measures necessary to ensure that workers are afforded adequate protection in the exercise of their fundamental rights to organise and defend 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 dark ink, appearing to read 'D. Blackburn', followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Blackburn, Director