ICTUR was founded to defend and extend trade union rights and to raise awareness of these rights and their violations around the world.
the metalworkers’ union Birleşik Metal İş, this is the sixth strike to be banned during the state of emergency. It comes in the middle of an on-going collective negotiation between the union and the Turkey Metal Industrialists’ Union (MESS), covering 130,000 workers. The government previously banned workers from striking during negotiations with MESS in 2015 and 2017.

These incidents add to the catalogue of concerns around the Turkish government’s serious, widespread and on-going violations of workers’ freedom of association – enshrined in the ILO’s fundamental Conventions, all eight of which Turkey has ratified. The ILO Committee of Freedom of Association has noted that the “responsibility for suspending a strike on the grounds of national security or public health should not lie with the Government, but with an independent body which has the confidence of all parties concerned” (Digest of decisions and principles of the Freedom of Association Committee of the Governing Body of the ILO, Fifth Edition, 2006, para. 571). In March 2015, the Committee concluded its response to a complaint submitted by Kristal-İş union by calling for the government to reform the relevant regulation: “... the Committee requests the Government to take the necessary measures for the amendment of section 63 of Act No. 6356 so as to ensure that the final decision whether to suspend a strike rests with an independent and impartial body” (Case No. 3084, para. 873(b)).

The Committee on Freedom of Association has also declared that, unless attended by appropriate judicial safeguards, the arrest and sentencing of trade unionists constitutes a serious interference with trade union rights, and a violation of the principles enshrined in the United Nations International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, (ILO Digest, paras. 72, 75, 93, 97, 106, 109). It is “incumbent upon the government” to show that the arrest, detention and sentencing of a trade union official are "in no way occasioned by the trade union activities of the individual concerned" (ILO Digest, para. 94).

ICTUR urges the Turkish authorities to immediately and unconditionally release all those who have been detained for activities carried out in their capacities as trade unionists, and to undertake all necessary measures to ensure the fundamental freedoms of workers to join and form unions and to 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,

Daniel Blackburn, Director