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Director

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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 links unions, lawyers,
academics and human rights organisations

The organisation was founded to defend and extend
trade union rights and to raise awareness of these
rights and to oppose their violation worldwide

By e-mail: privateoffice.external@homeoffice.gsi.gov.uk

Attn: Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP, Home Secretary,
Home Office, 2 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DF

CC:

Mick Cash, General Secretary,
National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT)

JULY 2018

Dear Home Secretary,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to express concern about a recent violent attack against trade unionists that occurred in London.

ICTUR understands that on 15 July trade unionists belonging to the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) were physically set upon by right-wing nationalist thugs. According to media reports, witnesses to the events described how the trade unionists were violently attacked by a group who attacked them while they sat for a drink on a Sunday afternoon outside the Westminster Arms pub on Storey's Gate in Central London. Earlier that day the RMT members had participated in what was described as a peaceful 'counter-protest' in opposition to a rally organised by British right-wing nationalists.

ICTUR recalls that the State has a responsibility under international law to ensure an environment in which trade unionists may exercise their rights to assembly and expression without fear of physical violence, further to International Labour Organisation Conventions No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, and No. 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining. ICTUR recalls that the State has on this occasion failed effectively to protect this right, and calls for the British Government to take steps to ensure that those responsible are identified and punished, that victims receive proper assurances, and compensation where appropriate, and that action is taken to improve the protection of workers' representatives against physical violence during and subsequent to future demonstrations.

ICTUR notes the relevant decisions of the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) maintain that the rights of workers can only be 'exercised in a climate that is free from violence, pressure or threats of any kind against the leaders and members of these organizations, 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 CFA has affirmed that an independent judicial inquiry should be instituted immediately to investigate assaults on the physical or moral integrity of individuals, in order to determine responsibility, punish those responsible and prevent repetition (*Digest*, paras. 46, 50, 184, 191). Failure to hold guilty parties to account creates a culture of impunity, 'which reinforces the climate of violence and insecurity, and which is extremely damaging to the exercise of trade union rights' (*ILO Digest*, para. 52).

ICTUR further expresses profound concern at the growing international profile of fascist and far-right nationalist movements throughout geographic Europe, from the UK and Scandinavia through France, Germany and Italy, with dramatic swells of support in southern and eastern Europe, and most seriously of all in Ukraine, but also in Russia and elsewhere. ICTUR calls on the British government to seriously take stock of this situation and to work with all democratic political parties to recognise the severe threat to world peace that is posed by fascism and to take urgent and coordinated steps to combat the rising threat of fascism globally.

ICTUR calls on the government to promptly investigate the circumstances around the attack. ICTUR will report this incident in the journal *International Union Rights*, which was established in 1993, and which enjoys a global readership.

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