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International Centre for Trade Union Rights

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

E-mail: ictur@ictur.org
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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

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:

Frances O'Grady, Trades Union Congress

September 2018

Dear Home Secretary,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to express serious concerns about the recent attack on the UK's Trades Union Congress bookshop by far-right extremists.

ICTUR understands that on 4 August, a group of twelve masked far-right protestors entered the Bookmarks bookshop in Bloomsbury, London, attempting to intimidate customers and staff, and destroying displays, books and magazines. One wore a mask of US President Donald Trump and video footage shows the group making threatening and Islamophobic comments. Bookmarks is the official bookseller of the TUC. This incident comes soon after the 15 July attack on trade unionists belonging to the National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) by right-wing nationalist thugs, also in central London.

ICTUR wishes to reiterate 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. According to the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association (CFA) 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 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 calls again on the British government to take steps to ensure that those responsible are identified and appropriately punished, that victims receive proper assurances, and compensation where appropriate, and that action is taken to improve the protection of those active in the labour movement against physical violence and intimidation. ICTUR again expresses its profound concern at the growing international profile of fascist and far-right nationalist movements throughout Europe.

ICTUR calls again on the government to urgently 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 effective and coordinated steps to combat the rising threat of fascism globally.

ICTUR further calls on the government to promptly investigate the circumstances around both of these recent attacks 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,

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

Daniel Blackburn, Director