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**International Centre for Trade Union Rights**

*Centro Internacional para los Derechos Sindicales*  
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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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**CC:** International Union of Foodworkers, Geneva

**January 2017**

Your Excellency,

The International Centre for Trade Union Rights is writing to express its concerns about the arrest and prosecution of a group of 30 workers who organised strike action at a food sector factory - belonging to the IFFCO Indian multinational – after they took strike action to demand the renegotiation of a collective agreement. We understand the factory employs around 700 workers. We are concerned also as to reports that some of the workers involved may also have received workplace sanctions, including suspensions from duty.

We are informed that the union's leaders Mohamed Said and Ahmed Bakr were arrested on 29 December, together with four other workers. On 2 January 2 a further 13 workers were arrested. We are further informed that 30 workers were subsequently brought before the Attaka criminal court on charges arising from allegations of vandalism against company premises. We are concerned that these allegations are being used to repress independent trade union activity, and to punish those responsible for organizing strikes at the factory. We understand that 3 of those brought before the court were released on bail, but 27 were held in detention, apparently awaiting 'sentencing', though we lack clear information as to whether or not the 27 have yet been tried and convicted. The next hearing, which we are told is for sentencing, is scheduled for 29 January.

ICTUR recalls that the arrest of striking workers constitutes a serious violation of freedom of association, as enshrined in International Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98. As the ILO's Committee

on Freedom of Association (CFA) has made clear, the arrest and sentencing of trade unionists ‘may constitute 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, unless attended by appropriate judicial safeguards’ (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). The detention of trade unionists for reasons connected with their activities in defence of the interests of workers ‘constitutes a serious interference with civil liberties in general and with trade union rights in particular’ (*Digest*, para. 64).

These arrests, detentions and criminal proceedings against workers who have organised industrial action in pursuit of workplace grievances are a cause for serious concern. ICTUR calls on the Egyptian authorities to take appropriate action to fulfil these obligations under international law, to ensure that these workers retain their liberty, and to protect the fundamental freedoms of workers to engage in trade union activities in defence of their interests. ICTUR will report this situation 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 horizontal line extending to the right.

Daniel Blackburn, Director, ICTUR