



## Iraq

Iraq has completed the formal process of ratification of ILO Convention No. 87 on freedom of association, and has now ratified all eight of the ILO's 'core' conventions. Convention 87 comes into force for Iraq in June 2019, one year after the completion of the ratification process.

## Thailand / Andy Hall case

A Thai court has dismissed on appeal the criminal defamation case against British labour rights activist Andy Hall, in a case for which Hall was found guilty in 2016, fined, and given a suspended prison sentence. Hall has been pursued by years by a Thai fruit company following his work on a report into labour standards in the fish and pineapple industries. Hall was found guilty just two months ago and was fined (see *IUR* 25.126) in another prosecution arising from the same research project and brought by the same company. Amnesty International's Thailand campaigner, Katherine Gerson, has called on the Thai authorities to 'repeal all criminal defamation laws and take measures to protect both the rights of migrant workers and the freedom of expression of those who are defending their rights'.

## Qatar

On 21 May Qatar ratified both of the UN's core 1996 human rights treaties, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Covenant on Social, Economic and Cultural Rights. These key instruments confer legally binding rights, and both contain important protection for trade union rights. However, Qatar has made formal reservations against migrant workers' rights to form unions.

## ITUC Global Rights Index

The fifth edition of the ITUC's Global Rights Index was published at the start of the International Labour Conference. Despite a rather fluctuating format over these years, it remains a vital source of information and analysis on the state of trade union rights worldwide. The evolution of the Index has been such that it is now a very different publication from the old format carried over from the ICFTU,

which grouped regional chapters with country by country analysis. This has been replaced by thematic discussion of trade union rights violations, giving a global context to the types of violation taking place around the world. In another new development the Index takes a swipe at a number of companies, listing them as 'companies violating workers' rights'.

## IFIs - World Development Report

The draft for the 2019 World Development Report, a flagship publication of the World Bank, last published in 2013, has alarmed trade union analysts by departing from what they had believed was an increasing acceptance by the Bank of common positions on basic principles in support of workers' rights. The draft calls for fewer 'burdensome' regulations on hire and fire, and appears to support lower wages, while arguing for zero-hours contracts and a flexible labour force. The ITUC's Washington Representative to the International Financial Institutions has responded with alarm to the Report, arguing that the Report fails to consider options to formalise work, but rather 'takes informality as an inevitable state and, worse, implies that it should even be promoted'.

## IFIs - Global Unions Statement

In the Global Unions Statement to the IFIs, a broad range of policy concerns were raised, relevant to a changing economy and developing technologies. Unions were 'highly concerned' about current economic policy decisions, and that these 'may be sowing the seeds of the next global recession and could strengthen its impact'. Unions affirmed that IFI support is needed to attain universal social protection, but questioned the Fund's policy compatibility with the Agenda 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Statement also raised concerns around the future of work and finance, anticipating major shifts in technology, automation and the digital revolution, and arguing that the IFIs need to 'act now to promote secure employment, shared prosperity, social protection and workers' rights'. Unions also called for 'a responsible and realistic approach to private sector involvement

in development', 'just transition for workers and social dialogue for a sustainable economy', and for the World Bank to cooperate fully with the ILO and trade unions on the implementation of its labour safeguard.

## IFIs - UN Special Rapporteur

The ITUC has expressed support for the findings and recommendations of a report 'The IMF and Social Protection' by Philip Alston, the UN's Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights. The report notes the IMF has had limited cooperation with the ILO and UN social protection agencies, and that the Fund has an ambiguous relationship to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow said, 'the Special Rapporteur is right on the mark when he states that real progress in expanding social protection to the majority of the world's population that has none will not happen unless the IMF consistently promotes the creation of fiscal space for social protection'. In a planned new 'strategic framework' on social protection the ITUC has called for the Fund to support the of the SDGs on social protection, drop resistance to universal coverage, and to work with other agencies and organisations that support expanded social protection.

## Turkey / ILC

Turkey's delegation to the International Labour Conference this year only listed representatives of the trade union centres HAK-IS and the public sector body Memur-Sen, which are both politically aligned with the socially conservative / moderate political Islam of the ruling AK Party. The five other major trade union confederations representing tendencies from the left through to conservative nationalism were absent from the official delegation, contrary to the ILO's tradition that political plurality should be respected.