

Turkey named among worst countries for workers

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Turkey has one of world's worst records for worker rights, as many workers face discrimination and violations of the right to unionize, a global report has found.

Earlier this month, the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) released its annual global ranking of worker rights in 141 countries, which includes "the worst countries in the world to work in," as described by the ITUC. The ITUC ratings range from 1 to 5+ in the report called "The 2015 ITUC Global Rights Index: World's Worst Countries for Workers," and Turkey received a rating of 5. The confederation said most workers in Turkey are deprived of their right to associate freely and to collectively bargain for fair wages and working conditions. The ITUC said in countries rated 5 and above -- including Turkey -- workers are "exposed to autocratic regimes and unfair labor practices."



In 2012, the International Labour Organization (ILO) ranked Turkey the worst in Europe and third worst in the world for workers' deaths that year. A decade of rapid growth has fueled a construction boom in Turkey, but worker safety standards have failed to keep pace. The country suffered its deadliest industrial accident last year in Soma when 301 coal mine workers died after an underground explosion. "The government has still failed to respond to the Soma mine disaster that killed 301 workers in 2014," the ITUC commented in its report.



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Among significant events during the reporting period of April 2014-March 2015, the report cited a strike held by workers at the dairy producer Süttaş in July of last year when the army intervened against striking workers at the Süttaş plant in the town of Karacabey, in Bursa province. "Previously, management had tried to break the strike by pouring 13 tons of liquid manure on the sit-in area," the ITUC recalled. Regarding pressure on labor and trade unions, the ITUC said, "Dozens of trade union activists are still in detention in Turkey, as Turkish unions continue to be deprived of their right to strike and to undertake peaceful protest action." Governments pursued criminal prosecution for peaceful and legitimate activities in countries such as Hong Kong, Korea, Spain and Turkey, the report explained, adding that employers used wide-ranging tactics such as dismissals, the non-renewal of contracts and wage and bonus cuts against workers trying to engage in a dialogue about their working conditions.

Regarding the global outlook, the report said the protection of the fundamental rights of working people has become more critical than ever with the erosion of rights, and increases in insecure, unsafe and informal work. According to ITUC, 82 out of 141 countries exclude certain types of workers from labor rights. In 99 out of 141 countries several categories of workers are excluded from the right to strike, the report adds. The number of countries with arbitrary arrests and detentions of workers for exercising their rights rose from 35 in the 2013-2014 reporting period to 44 in 2014-2015, the ITUC added.