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His Excellency Abdallah Hamdok
Prime Minister of the Republic of
Sudan

Khartoum - Sudan

17th December 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

Protest against Dissolution of Trade Unions in Sudan

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa) strongly protests against and condemns the decision of the transitional authorities of Sudan to dissolve all trade union organisations and professional associations in Sudan.

We have learnt that in the night of 14 December 2019, the ruling Sovereignty Council issued a Decree to dissolve all trade unions and professional associations in Sudan. Lieutenant General Yasser Al-Atta, member of Sovereignty Council, who heads the Committee on fighting corruption which was created by the Sovereignty Council, announced the Committee's decision to seize all properties and assets of all trade unions and establish a committee to revise trade union laws and prepare for new elections of leaders of trade unions under these new laws.

On 15 December 2019, it is reported that heavily armed police and soldiers first raided and barred the leaders of the Sudan Workers Trade Union Federation (SWTUF) and Sudan Journalists Union (SJU) from entering their offices, their properties were seized and their bank accounts frozen. Other unions were later in the day attacked, their offices sealed and properties seized.

The decision to dissolve trade unions of Sudan is an egregious violation of the freedom of association and should be reversed swiftly. The attacks on trade unions jeopardise the transition to democratic rule that the popular masses of Sudan are striving for in the wake of the popular struggles that forced General Al Bashir out of office. The decision of the transitional Sudanese authorities to dissolve unions is high handed and arbitrary and does not conform to existing laws on trade union existence in Sudan. The attack on trade unions violates the UN Charter on Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights which guarantee freedom of association. It is also a grave

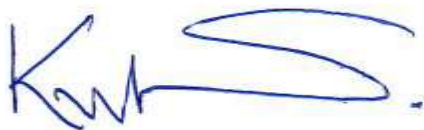
violation of ILO Convention 87 on freedom of association which is a core convention that all member states of the ILO are duty bound to respect.

The SWTUF is a federation whose leadership was elected by workers in accordance with a law that is still in effect. It is improper for any government or political party to interfere in its internal affairs or issue a decision to dissolve it or disrupt its activities. The decision of the governmental committee makes the unions and federations subject to partisanship and political bias in a manner that undermines the rights and independent nature of the trade unions and will have severe consequences on workers' organisation and struggle for their interests.

ITUC Africa demands the reversal of the decision to arbitrarily and unlawfully dissolve the SWTUF and the SJU as well as other unions and professional organisations. We call on the Sudanese transitional authorities to cease forthwith their interference in the internal affairs of trade unions and end the seizure of union properties and stop any restrictive measures against the affected trade union organisations by removing soldiers occupying union offices and to allow them to resume their legitimate trade union activities.

The transitional authorities of Sudan, led by Prime Minister Abdalla Hamdok, made an international commitment to protect human rights, including the right to freedom of association, but this decision does the opposite. This is a defining first test for the recently appointed transitional authorities and it is not too late for the current rulers of Sudan to address the situation in line with international labour standards and to give a strong signal that it is ready to treat working people, not as subjects to be dictated to, but as citizens with rights to be respected.

ITUC-Africa fully stands in solidarity with the workers of Sudan and their trade unions.



Kwasi Adu-Amankwah
General Secretary