



International Conference on Employment and the Right to Work blocked in Tunisia

More than 70 international participants from more than 20 countries have been prevented from holding a major conference on Employment and the Right to Work in the Euro-Mediterranean Area.

The meeting was to take place on the 8th and 9th of September in Tunis. It constituted the final step in a three-year project that included researchers from 8 countries of the Southern Mediterranean. The project was jointly organised by the Spanish trade union CC.OO / Fundación Paz y Solidaridad, the German Foundation Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, the Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network and the Euromed Trade Union Forum.

Two days prior to the start of the conference the organisers learnt that the conference and accommodation facilities had been withdrawn and that no alternatives could be found in the Greater Tunis Area to hold the conference. The organisers are convinced that the only reasonable explanation for this turn of events was the intervention of the Tunisian authorities. This is not the first time that freedom of expression and assembly have been grossly violated in Tunisia in recent times, in particular concerning independent activities of civil society.

The organisers are shocked by this incomprehensible action of the Tunisian authorities. The aim of the project is to provide a comprehensive analysis carried out jointly by economists, trade unionists and human rights organisations on a key issue affecting the majority of people living in the Euro-Mediterranean region and to present an agenda for action on employment in the partnership. Two previous meetings had already successfully been completed in Morocco and Jordan.

The organisers condemn this action of the Tunisian authorities. It is a violation of their human rights obligations and their commitment to the spirit and the principles of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership. It weakens Tunisia's credibility as a constructive Euro-Mediterranean partner and undermines efforts to advance economic and social rights in the region.

The organisers strongly believe that open debate and constructive dialogue that includes civil society organisations are essential for democratic and human development in the region.

All those involved in the project are committed to further advance the crucial issue of employment and the right to work in the Euro-Mediterranean partnership.

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Euromed Trade Union Forum: Peter Seideneck, +33.673.95.00.85, pseidene@etuc.org

Euromed Human Rights Network: Marc Schade-Poulsen, +45.32.64.17.10, msp@euromedrights.net

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung: Ralf Melzer, +49.30.26935.738, ralf.melzer@fes.de

Fundación Paz y Solidaridad / CC.OO: Maria Romay, +34.91.444.09.50, mromay@fps.ccoo.es