
Solidarity with Egyptian workers
News from Egypt
14 February 2011

Egyptian workers strike as independent unions clash with state-run rival

As the Egyptian revolution plays out, independent unions are calling for the dissolution of the state-run Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) as workers continue to protest for better rights and conditions. This is further evidence that Egyptians are keen on root and branch democratisation of their country, not just replacing one elite with another.

Industrial action

Associated Press reported that Egypt was hit by a wave of pay strikes by public sector workers today. Thousands of state employees, from ambulance drivers to police and transport workers joined a growing wave of labour unrest unleashed by the uprising that removed President Hosni Mubarak.

It has also been [reported](#) that the ruling military council had made a public plea for the strikers to return to work, while some [reported](#) that the military were about to go further and ban strikes. However, the independent unions are not keen to clash with the military, and report that the army has done nothing 'rash' yet.

Conflict with state-run unions

Further evidence that the independent unions are acting freely – on top of the strikes taking place – was a demonstration mounted outside the headquarters of the state-run official trade union organisation, the ETUF. Trade unionists from the Union of Real Estate Tax Authority Employees (one of the first independent unions to be established) called for the ETUF leaders to be tried and the federation disbanded. The protest was reported in full on the [Al Masry Al Youm website](#).

And yesterday, the newly formed Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions issued the following statement calling on Egyptian workers to support the independent union movement.

A Message to Egyptian Workers

Colleagues in all workplaces,

Now that the republic of fear, despotism and corruption has fallen, now that the 25 January revolution succeeded in overthrowing the Mubarak regime, it is incumbent upon us, we workers, to purge the country of the remnants of the regime and its servants.

President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) Hussein Megawer and his coterie, have been imposed by the state security apparatus to talk in our names through rigged elections found null and void by the Administrative Court. They sold our interests and betrayed our cause. They lived their lives servants for every authority and slaves of all rulers. All they cared about was the accumulation of illicit gain, and indeed they became millionaires living in villas and luxurious apartments, and driving around in luxury cars. We challenge them to disclose their wealth and its sources, and to provide a public statement about their financial status.

Today is the day of judgment. It is the day on which these people should pay the price of their crimes against workers. We will not remain silent regarding those who stole workers' money, who facilitated and profited from the sell-off the public sector. We will pursue them through all legal means.

In the name of the martyrs of the revolution who spilled their blood to pave our road to freedom, and against whom Hussein Megawer and his gang conspired, by issuing statements against the revolution and hiring thugs to attack the insurgents in Tahrir Square, do not allow those people to remain unpunished for their crimes. Let our first step on the road to freedom be the immediate withdrawal from the governmental federation that fell with the downfall of the regime. On 30 January 2011, the Constituent Body of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions was formed in a meeting attended by representatives of the Independent Union of Real Estate Tax Collectors, the Union of Pensioners, the Union of Health Technicians, the Independent Union of Teachers, as well as workers' leaders from Mahalla, Helwan, 10th of Ramadan and Sadat City. Let us join the new independent federation.

Today, Egyptian workers can build their independent trade union organization. They can build it freely as a strong trade union organization capable of defending their interests and improving their conditions of work.

Let us start today, not tomorrow. The road is clear. We all have to withdraw from this governmental federation that fell with the fall-down of the regime. Let us all ask the management in our workplaces to stop deducting union subscriptions from our pay. Let us together build our independent union and our independent federation, a federation subject to the workers' will rather than the powers that be.

The Constituent Body of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions.

Egypt



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