



Unions from UK and Turkey call for UK government to suspend trade deal with Turkey until workers' rights are respected

The TUC, DISK and KESK collectively represent over 5.8 million workers in the UK and Turkey. We stand together in calling for trade deals to enforce respect for fundamental labour rights to stop a race to the bottom and promote decent work.

We are concerned that on 29 December the UK government signed a trade agreement with the government of Turkey that contains no enforceable commitments for Turkey to respect labour rights, following the same approach as Turkey's customs agreement with the EU. This will mean it will not be possible to use the UK-Turkey agreement to stop the government of Turkey abusing the rights of unions and workers and committing widespread human rights abuses, as it has done in an increasingly brutal manner in recent years.

Workers and public employees as well as trade unionists in Turkey face various forms of administrative and judicial harassment for carrying out legitimate and ordinary trade union activities. These repressive policies and practices include administrative investigations, suspension, dismissals, unfounded termination of contracts, forced relocation of workers and public employees, court cases, arrests, detention and

physical attacks against democratic protestors. There are numerous reports¹ that document these violations.

For these reasons we oppose the trade deal between the UK and Turkey at the current time.

The UK government must use its approach to trade negotiations to support human and labour rights.

We call on the UK government to require the government of Turkey to show respect for core International Labour Organisation conventions as a pre-condition for the UK-Turkey agreement being applied.

Any UK-Turkey trade deal should contain the following key elements:

1. commitments to ratify and respect International Labour Organisation core conventions on labour rights and UN Sustainable Development Goals that are effectively enforceable – with penalties for violations and a role for trade unions in the enforcement process;
2. protections for the rights of migrant workers, refugees and asylum seekers– any agreement must allow migrant workers and asylum

¹ Human Rights Association's annual assessment on human rights in Turkey:

<https://ihd.org.tr/en/ihd-2019-report-on-human-rights-violations-in-turkey/>

Confederation of Public Employees' Trade Unions report on the trade union rights and freedoms in Turkey:

http://en.kesk.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/KESKs_opinions_on_current_trade_union_situation.pdf

ITUC Global Rights Index for 2019:

<https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/2019-06-ituc-global-rights-index-2019-report-en-2.pdf>

Turkey is among the ten worst countries for trade union rights.

Report of the Committee of Experts on the Application of the Conventions and Recommendations for 2020:

https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_736204.pdf

seekers to enforce their rights regardless of their immigration status;

3. protections for the right of governments to use public procurement and state-owned enterprises to support economic development, improve working conditions and pursue social and environmental objectives;
4. protections for all public services by completely excluding all public services such as health, education and transport - opening public services up to global market forces will not benefit our communities who rely on universal, quality public services that must be run for public benefit, not private profit;
5. protections for the right of governments to establish and maintain policies necessary to protect consumers and workers through data integrity, security and privacy measures, and prevent the misuse of data for any form of discrimination;
6. protections for the right of governments to regulate the cross-border flow of data, require companies to have a local presence, access source code and algorithms and maintain privacy and consumer protections to protect public health and prevent discrimination;
7. exclusions for all kinds of special courts for foreign investors such as Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) or the Investment Court System (ICS), which allow foreign investors to sue governments for actions that threaten their profits;

8. exclusions for extensions of patent protection or data exclusivity periods for pharmaceutical drugs;
9. commitments for our governments to support and implement the Paris Agreement and policies to support Just Transition; and
10. expansion of cooperation to combat unfair trade practices including strong antidumping and countervailing duty provisions, and prevent circumvention and evasion of action taken.