

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

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More than 70 international participants from 20 countries were 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 8-9 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Two days prior to the start of the conference organisers learnt that the meeting and accommodation facilities had been withdrawn and that no alternatives could be found in the Greater Tunis Area to hold the conference.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 conference was 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 Tunisia's human rights obligations and its 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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