

Both governments committed themselves to the agreement and attended the Arab Labor Conference. The agreement was officially documented in the Arab Labor Organization. Yet the agreement was only on paper, and the working class in these two countries is suffering from the authorities' repression.

In North Yemen, the controversy continues over the issue of the legitimacy of the trade union. The authorities dissolved the existing union (that is still active outside the country) and formed a new one. The majority of the working class is still not allowed to form its own trade union anywhere in the country.

In Tunisia, the authorities invaded all the centers of the Tunisian trade unions, confiscated all their finances and possessions, and encouraged a number of the ruling party's puppets to form new national committees instead. The general secretary of the union, Ashoor, and a number of union leaders and cadres were imprisoned, or placed under town arrest. The authorities called for a conference outside the framework of the legitimate union, where they elected a new leadership of their own men in an attempt to liquidate the legitimate leadership. The legitimate leadership continues to struggle under very harsh conditions.

In addition, there are all the common cases, that occur in most Arab countries, of restricting demonstrations and strikes and forcibly repressing them, prohibiting meetings and rallies, and government censorship of any organizational work. The Arab Labor Organization and the trade union freedoms committee were unable to take a firm position on these oppressive measures. Their silence is exactly what the authorities want.

THE REGIMES' ROLE

2. Government agents within the Arab Labor Organization collaborate with employers to minimize the workers' role. They cooperate in aborting any project intended to benefit the working class, or raise the workers' technical, organizational or educational level. These government agents outdid themselves to abort the Arab center project for technical training. They forbade the construction of the center, although the project was intended to raise the technical capabilities of the working class. Government agents, in cooperation with the employers, also hindered the work of the Arab Institute for Technical Safety and Health, by minimizing its budget to the point where it became completely paralyzed. This occurred despite the fact that this institute contributes to protecting workers by providing them with specific studies about workers' safety rules for each industry.

These government agents also aborted the project of the Arab Institute for Workers' Studies, that is affiliated to the International Union for Arab Workers' Trade Unions. They did not carry out the resolutions of the Arab Labor Organization's 9th to 13th conferences. They created obstacles to hinder the establishment of the institute that the Arab working class badly needed.

These facts show which way the Arab Labor Organization is going at present. The Saudi government plays a major role in distracting the organization's attention from its main goals, hindering its work and transforming it into a marginal organization with no effect on labor and laborers, and no role in protecting trade union freedoms and rights.

RESOLUTIONS IGNORED

3. The conferences of the Arab Labor Organization have adopted many resolutions concerning the rights and freedoms of workers, technical guidance and training, and paid leave of absence for education.

These resolutions were generally adopted to achieve a better life for the Arab working class. Yet up till now, they remain ink on paper. They were not carried out in most Arab countries. The Arab Labor Organization did stress implementation of these resolutions in seminars and lectures. The resolutions were also brought up as points on the agendas of the conferences, to be used to criticize the Arab governments that violate them. What is worse is that the Gulf countries, especially Saudi Arabia, do not adhere to any agreements that do not please them. These agreements are not implemented by the government or the administration of the Arab Labor Organization office in these countries. The offices work to freeze these agreements in order to please the government. Thus, over time, the agreements are forgotten.

SLAVE LABOR

4. During the past years, a new phenomenon started in Saudi Arabia and the Gulf countries: total dependence on Asian labor without any rules to regulate this phenomenon and protect the Arab laborers' rights. This phenomenon grew due to the import offices and companies that wanted to increase their income at the expense of the Asian workers. This trade has become similar to a slave market. Employers started enslaving both Asian and Arab workers who have no human or social rights whatsoever.

The International Union for Arab Trade Unions puts forth these facts, which all aim to defeat the working class, in order to expose the exploitation and inhuman practices against our workers. We will work to confront these practices by all means possible. We will also confront all the authorities' instruments and methods used against workers and their organization. We will work to make the Arab Labor Organization a means for supporting the rights of the Arab working class, for raising their technical and economic level, and for respecting their freedom of organization.

We, in the General Secretariat, request that you use all your potentials to help us in this confrontation to eliminate oppression, free leaders from prison, enforce respect for human rights and carry out the agreements and resolutions of Arab and international labor organizations in all of the Arab countries. We will continue to expose these oppressive practices to Arab and international public opinion, and to the masses of the Arab working class, to consolidate their confrontation, achieve their goals and establish and activate their organizations.

