Education International
Internationale de l'Education
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Bildungsinternationale

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President
Thulas Nxesi

General Secretary
Fred van Leeuwen

His Excellency
Mr. Sali Berisha
Prime Minister
Republic of Albania

Brussels, 8 August 2007.

Dear Prime Minister:

I am writing to you on behalf of Education International, the Global Union representing teachers and education workers, to protest the expulsion of the Confederation of Trade Unions of Albania (KSSH) and the Union of Independent Trade Unions of Albania (BSPSH) from their offices on 1 August. Teachers worldwide are appalled to learn that the activities of two democratic organizations should be disrupted in such a way.

Education International has learned that the police entered the trade union offices at the "Pallati Ali Kelmendi" on Boulevard "Zogu I Pare" in Tirana and forcefully removed trade union property and documents, some of which were destroyed in the process. It is regrettable that the unions received no prior notice that such actions would be undertaken and that staff were prevented from entering the building. There are reports that the trade unions attempted to liaise with the Government and the police authorities as the events occurred, but their efforts were of no avail.

Education International notes that Albanian authorities have in the past pledged to find solutions to the need for trade union premises. We deeply regret that such a pledge was not fulfilled and express our serious concern that freedom of association, the cornerstone of a democratic society, might be endangered in your country. In compliance with the International Labour Organization Conventions regarding freedom of association, ratified by the Republic of Albania in 1957, we urge your government to refrain from any interference which would restrict said right and to take all necessary and appropriate measures to ensure that workers may exercise freely the right to organise.

Taking into account the seriousness of this matter, Education International calls for your immediate intervention in order to enable KSSH and BSPSH to resume their normal activities. Albanian workers rely on these organizations to defend their interests, to promote better working conditions and, most importantly, to work in collaboration with the government in order to eradicate child labour and to achieve the goals of Education for All. Your efforts in making sure that an immediate solution for this situation is found will be greatly appreciated.

Your sincerely,

Fred van Leeuwen

General Secretary

Education International