



**CENTER FOR TRADE UNION & WORKERS SERVICES**

**)CTUWS (**

**Honored the French Republic's Human Rights Prize**

**Bitter Harvest**  
**A Report about the Violations against**  
**Labour Freedoms in 2015**

## **Preface**

The months of 2015 have progressed among a besiegement of the political powers and civil society organizations, a regression of political participation, planting fear and frustration and loss of hope in change and progress towards the building of a civil state based on respect of law and a fair distribution of wealth and opportunities between citizens. The labour movement and its independent unions were at the depth of this scene as a target the authorities was out to get.

It was clear through 2015 that the regime works on reproducing the Mubarak's policies not only through dependence on Mubarak's men but preserving the institutions of his regime and business men which was manifested in the policy of the regime towards the labour movement.

Although the 2014 constitution asserted in its 76<sup>th</sup> article on the worker's right to establish their unions freely and guaranteed their independence, the practices of the regime during 2015 were in the opposite direction. The state worked on preserving the official General Union and worked on using it as a threat against the labour movement and generously bestowed on its men regardless of their corruption.

On the other side the regime corners the independent unions, harass their leaders, and push its media personalities to launch media campaigns to defame the independent unions and their leaders. This discourse moved from directed screens to periodical leaflet issued on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 by the secretariat of the cabinet according to directives from the president asking the ministers to cooperate with the administrative committee appointed to run the affairs of the official union to confront the independent unions and the instigators in the labour field, thus clearly revealing the antagonism against labour freedoms.

Despite these policies that antagonize independent unions and their leaders, independent unions continued to play a role in defending worker rights. The most prominent of these battles was the battle against "The Civil Service Law" number 18 for the year 2015 which was issued without any societal dialogue even though it organizes the working relationship of more than 6 million employees working with the state. On August 10<sup>th</sup> 2015 Cairo witnessed the biggest demonstration after June 30<sup>th</sup> in which more than 5000 employees of the tax authority participated to protest against the civil service law. This demonstration forced the government to enter into a dialogue with independent unions about the executive statute of the law. The independent unions managed to perform a number of amendments that had been demanded by the independent unions that the government had not previously paid attention to.

In this report we record the bitter harvest and incidents that the labour movement went through in the days and months of 2015.

## **Beginning**

At the end on 2006 a turning point in the modern history of the Egyptian working class took place when large scale protests and strikes took place, not previously seen witnessed by the labour movement headed by the Mahala Textile strike.

This strike that only lasted three days shook Egypt and helped Mahala Workers extract their rights out of the claws of the government that gave in to their demands. Labour gains spilled over to all the weaving and textile companies igniting the fire of other strikes and sit ins in Public Work companies after the workers were assured of the strength of striking as a weapon.

Al Mahala Strike revealed the ugly face of the union committee as represented by the general union for weaving and textiles in Al Mahala weaving company. The real inclinations of the members of the General Union, who are submissive to the government that decides -solely- whether or not they remain in their positions.

In fact a delegation of the workers in the company went to the hand the general union for textiles and weaving a signed petition from their union announcing that they do not recognize members of the union committee as representatives of them and demanding new elections of the union committee. The general union which is subsidiary to the General Union of Egyptian Workers, the tool of the government, refused the decision of the workers.

The wave of strikes started to rise

By the end of 2007 around 55,000 real estate tax employees organized a main strike in front of the cabinet that lasted for more than a week asking to be equated in wages with their colleagues in the general tax authority.

The employees forced the government to implement their demands and the wages increased fourfold. Out of this strike came the idea of establishing the first independent union in Egypt. The employees announced that they were breaking with the general union which stood against their strike as usual. The general union for workers in the real estate tax authority was born; the first union in Egypt to gain independence from the General Union of Egyptian Workers.

In light of this atmosphere, the Center for Trade Union and Worker Services launched a campaign in 2008 demanding the raisin of legal restrains on the right to form unions. The first draft law about labour freedoms came out in the context of this campaign. Soon strikes spread and moved from the public sector to the private sector and from the old industrial areas to the new industrial areas. They also moved to sectors where striking was not a part of the culture such as teachers, doctors and governmental employees.

Health technicians announced the second independent union in Egypt and were followed with pensioners.

Labour strikes and social protests continued up to the January 25<sup>th</sup> revolution in 2011.

## **In the Heart of the Revolution**

Exactly nine days before the revolution on January 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 the workers of several companies came out in rallies demonstrating in front of Ezz Steel in the industrial zone north west of the Suez Gulf to protest government policies that work on detracting for the workers' rights in favor of the businessmen. Workers continued to demonstrate union the 25<sup>th</sup> of January with the whole scene exploded.

Thousands of workers left their factories and the companies of the industrial zone to melt into the rebelling people. The city of Suez, which witnessed the most violent confrontations between the people and the forces of Mubarak's regime became the fire ball out of which the first sparks of the revolution came out.

On the Friday of Rage, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2011, events escalated and the demonstrators managed to break the security arm of the regime represented in the ministry of interior and popular committees took control of most of Egypt's streets. Worker sites were disrupted and therefore workers lost an important weapon by not being present in their work places as an organized bloc of people that is able to control and pressure. This however, did not prevent many from joining the popular protests in the roads of Suez, Mahala, Alexandria, Nag Hammadi and almost all of the Egyptian governorates.

in the midst of the Egyptian revolution, on January 30<sup>th</sup> 2011 and upon an initiative by the CTUWS, the independent unions that were established before the revolution, met: they were, the real estate tax employees, the Union of Pensioners, the Union of Health technicians and with participants from among the labour leaders in Mahala, Helwan, Sadat City and the 10<sup>th</sup> of Ramadan City, to announce the formation of the Egyptian Union for independent syndicates.

48 hours before Mubarak stepped down the workers returned to their work places. Subsequently some thought that things have calmed down and that the regime has regained its economic arm after the army went down to the streets. But as soon as the workers returned to their factories, they announced that they were going on strike in hundreds, or thousands of labour sites, speeding up the fall of Mubarak.

### **After the revolution**

In one of the days of the Egyptian Spring, March 12<sup>th</sup> 2011, and in a press conference attended by Juan Sumavia, the director general of the ILO, Ahmed Hassan Al Borai, the minister of labour at the time, announced the issuing the declaration of the Labour Freedoms in Egypt.

This was a preliminary step aiming at remedying the labour conditions that had reached a degree of imbalance and contradiction that could no longer tolerate any more silence or waiting. Despite this “preliminary” announcement was – and still is- not sufficient to remedy the forms of misbalance and congestion in the labour field. It was however a slight crack in the wall that was always closed in front of labour freedoms. Due to this announcement, workers in Egypt were able to establish hundreds of independent unions.

In August 2011, the spark of hope that was ignited shone by Al Borai’s decision number 187 for the year 2011 dissolving the board of the General Union of Egyptian Workers.

2011 passed and the old union law number 35 for the year 1976 remained standing. It specified that there is one labour union that still stands and the hellish system of coalition between the institution “the General Union of Egyptian Workers” and governmental departments and a number of business men and private company owners is still as it is. The companies’ and establishments’ Intransigence reached a stage where they refused to deal with independent unions and negotiate with them. Moreover they to punitive measures against them. Unionized individuals were fired from their work and some of them were transferred to remote areas. Somewhere fined and harassed with the excuse that their unions do not abide by the terms of the old labour union law.

In the middle of 2011 the ministry of labour issued a draft law organizing union work in Egypt and guaranteeing labour freedoms. All of the three parties of the work participated: workers, employers and the government. The cabinet approved it and raised it to the Supreme Council for the Armed Forces. But the draft law remained locked up with the military council. The happy era did not last long. A few months later an incident happened that the labour movement felt was a step backwards. That was when the military council issued its military order number 34 for the year 2011 that criminalized the right to striking and accordingly the military court ruled in the case number 2535 for the year 2011 to imprison 11 workers for a year.

2012 brought no noticeable change. Despite the promises by President Mohamed Morsi to achieve social justice and the participation of the Brotherhood and their ruling party “Freedom and Justice”

in the discussions about the law of labour freedoms and their permanent declaration at the time that they stand by the workers' right to establish their independent unions freely. However they gradually backed on these promises as soon as they reached power.

This became clear with the obstacles to the labour freedoms law in the corridors of the parliament where the brotherhood held a majority and which was annulled in the middle of 2012. This was a duplication of its obstruction by the military council for several months.

Thus the law that restricts labour freedoms remained as is despite a change for a parliament after the revolution. The government actually issued draft laws that are against freedoms in general that were added to the arsenal of laws from the past era. This happens despite the presence of more than 2800 independent unions to date.

### **The year 2012 witnessed the firing and the displacement of tens of leaders of the independent unions**

In 2013 the harassment of independent unions continued and many private sector companies fired tens of leaders of the independent unions.

The morning of May 13th 2013 those responsible for the headquarters of the CTUWS in Nag Hammadi (the temporary premises of the regional union on the Southern Upper Egypt union of independent syndicates) found out that people unknown to them have stolen the contents of the premises including the paperwork related to the independent unions joining the Democratic Union of Egyptian Workers.

With the beginning of the June 30th demonstrations in 2013 any workers were optimistic by the ousting of President Mohamed Morsi but anyone following the conditions of workers will find that they have become worse in the second half of the year.

With the calls to fight terrorism and the organizations of political Islam the Egyptian working class in the same year witnessed unprecedented violations.

The consecutive governments did not deal with labour protests in the way appropriate by a government that came following popular revolutions. The protest movements were instead faced with defaming of the protests and their leaders through state owned newspapers. Additionally strikes and sit ins were stigmatized as crimes from the alters of mosques. The ruling regimes sanctioned the phenomena of businessmen renting thugs to assault striking workers with live ammunition.

With the arrival of 2014 the laws restricting labour freedoms have remained as they are and the corrupt labour leaders still hold their positions. The most prominent headline of the year was the reinstating of the General Union of Egyptian Workers. Even though there are no independent unions in the public business sector, harassment has reached labour leaders in it who demand the workers' rights. This was not limited to firing them as was the case with the leaders of Mahala Weaving but escalated to an attempted assassination against the labour leader in the Metal and Steel Company Mohamed Omar on May 4th 2014.

The year 2014 was also distinguished from the two previous years by direct intervention from the ministry of labour force and immigration in the affairs of independent unions. The ministry of labour Kamal Abu Aita issued a decree on February 15th 2014 annulling the board of the national union for health sciences and freezing the bank account of the union. This was under the pretense that there were financial misdemeanors by the board of the union. The stubbornness extended to the ministry of labour not ratifying the decisions of the general assembly of the union of sales tax workers and interfering in the affairs of the democratic union of Egyptian workers.

In the last week of 2014 Dr. Nahid Al Ashry, the minister of labour who proceeded Kamal Abu Aita, made statements to several dailies against independent unions saying that the later were a burden left in the ministry by Dr. Ahmed Hassan Al Boraie, accusing them of being the reason for weakening the labour union movement. She then issued a decision to stop giving the new independent unions the banking letter that allows the union to open a bank account in its name.

The security and judicial prosecution of the leaders of independent unions continued. Security forces even attacked sit ins shooting pellets and tear gas at the striking workers injuring many of them and arresting a large number.

## **Administrative interventions in the affairs of independent unions**

### **The only union representative**

On March 8<sup>th</sup> 2015 in a letter to the general authority for petroleum issued by the assistant executive president of the authority for administrative affairs, the following was written “the union committee subsidiary to the general union of Petroleum workers is the legitimate and legal representative of the workers inside the company and legally it is not possible to deal with any other party. It is the only legitimate party and the legal umbrella responsible for the rights of workers in the sector and for preserving their rights and gains”

The letter by the assistant president of the administrative affairs came in response to a letter from Mohamed Mahmoud Ahmed Saafan, the head of the general union of petroleum workers and secretary of international relations and the vice president of the General Union of Egyptian Workers. This letter contained an attack on the independent unions describing them as “fake unions” aiming at “raising disruptions and unrest among the workers who have no statute or law to protect them and their aim is to encourage strikes inside any institution they exist in. Because this is a clear transgression of the laws related to work and workers”. Accordingly Samaan, asked the general authority of petroleum to abide by considering the general union and its union committees, he party assigned to “defend the interests of workers and solely negotiate in their name” with the excuse that they are enlisted under the entity of the General Union of Egyptian Workers that falls under law number 35 for the year 1976 and its amendments. Auditing all its financial affairs takes place through the state’s supervisory institutions (The Central Accounting Authority where its funds are recorded under public funds only).

This comes at a time when the reports of the supervisory authorities about the work of the board of the General Union and its syndicates confirm the wasting of tens of millions of Pounds from the funds of the workers. This led to the representative of the Central Accounting Authority withdrawing from the general assembly called for by the administrative committee who did not have the right or for do so. The representative of the Central Accounting Authority refused to ratify the budget of the governmental trade union!!

The head of the general union forgets, as he writes this letter, that he is a temporary member of an administrative committee that runs the affairs of the union only until labour elections take place after the ministerial decision to annul the governmental trade union on August 4<sup>th</sup> 2011 in accordance with several court verdicts. He would not have still held his position if not for the

insistence of the consecutive Egyptian governments to keep this administrative committee weighing over the workers, and extending the terms of the union, the last of which was in May 2015 for a fourth consecutive time by a presidential decree that extended it for a year.

While the head of the General Union refers to the trade union law number 35 for the year 1967 and its amendments, he fails to say that this law contradicts the international conventions signed by Egypt and especially treaties number 87 and 98 concerning labour freedoms and the right of workers to organize themselves freely in independent and democratic unions. He also fails to mention that the 2014 constitution stipulates that Egypt should respect all the obligations mentioned in the international treaties it has ratified.

In his letter the head of the general union denies the legitimacy of the independent unions and does not speak about the declaration of labour freedoms issued on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2011 by the ministry of labour that includes an admission by the ministry that Egyptian workers have the right to establish their unions. Subsequent to this declaration the ministry specified that the labour departments in the different governorates are to receive the paperwork necessary for the establishment and to give the applicants whatever proves that in addition to a letter to the bank asking it to open an account for the union to complete the components of its being as a legal entity and to guarantee its ability to perform its role.

### **Taking Islamic Sharia as an Excuse: Striking is banned**

On 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2015, labour freedoms received a severe blow contrary to the terms of the Egyptian constitution when the Higher Administrative Court in the State Council issued a verdict about the striking of employees inside their work place. It punished three employees responsible for the local unit in “Kors” in the township of Ashmoun by forcing them to retire and postponed the promotion of 14 other employees for two years with the excuse that they went on strike and delayed the work.

The court said that that demonstrating should be in the street or a public square and that meetings are also to be held in a public place. As for gatherings, they can only take place in the roads or public places. Consequently a sit in is not considered a demonstration or a meeting or a gathering but is in truth a strike because of workers refraining from performing their jobs and their jobs without abandoning the tasks of their jobs.

The court added that the rules of the Islamic Sharia depend on the rule of religious law stipulating that preventing harm gains priority over causing benefits. If striking brings harm upon those who deal with “public utilities”, Islamic Sharia will not allow such behavior not only because it harms citizens but also because it is a form of rebellion against the authority of the presidency despite that obeying the president is obligatory.

The court depended in its verdict on the “condition” that was mentioned in the presidential declaration number 537 for the year 1981 that was issued by the late president Mohamed Anwar Al Sadat concerning the approval of International Convention for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that was approved by the United Nations taking into consideration the rules of Islamic Sharia and that it should not contradict “the convention” with a reservation on the ratification. Therefore the Egyptian government, even thought it had

pledged to guarantee the right of striking, it also stipulated that for this right to be granted it has to be in accordance to the rules of Islamic Sharia.

### **Security are still asking about you**

Upon establishing the union of workers and craftsmen in Al Saf, the deputy of the founders placed the paperwork in the labour department in Giza where the head of the department reviewed the papers himself and passed them on to the ministry of labour under the number 8 in the records issued on January 20<sup>th</sup> 2015.

When he followed up with the official responsible for communication with unions in the ministry about the flow of the paperwork, the latter made fun of him saying “Security forces are still asking about you”.

On September 7<sup>th</sup> 2015, 8 months later and during which the deputy of the founders did not stop going to the ministry to follow up on the establishment papers, one of the officials in the union communication office replied that the independent unions are “a demonic growth” and the head of the union communication in the department that the papers are with the Public Security according to their strict orders so that they could investigate the founders of the union who in turn turned over the papers to the security of the ministry who in turn said they sent the papers to the public security who have not yet replied.

This comes after the minister of labour announced the declaration of union freedoms on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2011 that contained an admission on the side of the ministry to the right of Egyptian workers to establish their unions in accordance to Egypt’s obligations and its ratification of conventions and treaties foremost among which is treaty number 87 for the year 1948 and treaty number 98 for the year 1949. The ministry specified the departments of labour in the different governorates to receive the papers necessary for the establishment and to give the founders proof and a letter to the back to open an account for the union completing its legal entity and guarantee its ability to perform activities. The department of communication with unions in the ministry was assigned with accepting the establishment papers of the general syndicates and specified, regional and general unions. Lately however and since the establishment of the cabinet of Ibrahim Mehleb and the appointment of Nahed Ashry to the ministry of labour, has put obstacles to the establishment of unions, the last of which was what was revealed, that is the sending of union papers to the general security that has no role and should not interfere in the right of workers to voluntarily organize in unions that represent their interests and defend their rights and improve the conditions of their work.

### **Confronting independent unions and “instigators”**

On November 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 and in an escalation against independent unions that represents a stark violation on labour freedoms, the cabinet issued a periodic leaflet according to directives by the president that was as follows

- 1) The importance of the abiding by the unified directive that is approved by the cabinet that unifies the policies of dealing with financial matters related to the labour sector in similar companies of the different ministries.
- 2) The concerned ministries are to coordinate with the General Union of Egyptian Workers in achieving the rightful gains of workers to

activate its role in labour circles against independent unions and “instigators” through organizing monthly meetings with the leaders of the union and the professional general unions to detect problems early and consult about solving them through field trips and project this in the media to establish the governments interest in labour problems.

- 3) Studying the holding of a wide scale meeting with the second and third level of leaders in the ministries, authorities, governorates and companies to help them become aware of the dimensions of the stage and the achievements that have been achieved to encourage their role in the upcoming stage considering that they are the backbone of executive work. This periodic leaflet ignores a number of facts:

**First:** The problems that the workers suffer from in the continuity of this administrative committee that runs the official union that was appointed in 2011 consequent to Essam Sharaf’s cabinet implementing final verdicts that ruled that the union elections that took place in 2006 are annulled because of rigging.

**Second:** That independent unions were established by the will of workers and they were not forced to join them and their membership fees are not forcibly collected. This is contrary to governmental entity falsely called the Worker’s Union that forces workers to join it and deducts membership fees from them forcibly while the workers do not even have the right to know where the revenue from these membership fees are spent

**Thirds:** Independent unions gains their legitimacy not only from the will of the workers that established them but also from the constitution and the treaties concerning labour freedoms that Egypt had signed. It was therefore not acceptable to portray independent unions as illegitimate entities and their members as groups of villains that work against the interests of the homeland.

## **Observing the abusive practices against labour leaders**

- In a continuation of the series of abuses against independent labour leaders demanding the rights of their colleagues, the president of the board of Al Nahr Al Khaled readymade clothing company in the investment zone in Port Said issued an order against Mohamed Ouiss, the secretary general of the independent union in the Port Said investment area and the vice president of the Democratic Union of Egyptian Workers that they should submit to investigation on Sunday January 4<sup>th</sup> 2015 under the pretense that they attacked his office and attempted to assault him.

Ouiss on his side denied the accusations and pointed out that the head of the board refused to grant him a regular holiday out his regular holiday account and when he tried to meet the head of the board to find out the reason for his refusal he was not allowed and was scolded in front of the managers of the different sectors.

The board of the company began to harass the leaders of the independent unions after workers went on strike eight months

earlier to object the transfer of their colleagues to other places. The head of the board issued a decision that members of the independent unions cannot be granted holidays except through him even though this is the domain of the managers of the sectors.

- On January 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 the management of Lenin Group for linens fired the labour leader Mohamed Hassan Abu El Yazid without prior notice with the excuse that he gathered the workers of the company to take a training course about workers' rights organized by the ILO for the workers of the Alexandria governorates!!

The suspension decree stated "It was decided to suspend you from work until the end of the investigations in what you have been accused of, that is gathering workers to attend external gatherings intended to do harm to the establishment".

Abu El Yazid doubted the legality of the administration's decision that stated that it was issued in accordance to article 110 of the Egyptian Labour law number 12 for the year 2003 that states "The employer cannot terminate the contract except after notifying the second party in writing before the end... or the proving of his incompetence according to what is stated in the established statutes". He said that the management did not send him a notification as is mentioned in the decision and that competence reports for 14 years were in his favor.

- On January 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 the administration of the Misr for Textile and Weaving "Mahala Weaving" fired two labour leaders, Nagui Haidar and Gamal Gad, under the pretense that they have instigated the workers of the company to strike and obstruct work. This was in relation to a the workers of the company going on strike for four consecutive days starting January 13<sup>th</sup>, to demand the full amount of the "earnings" for the fiscal year 2013/2014 which amounts to two months' salary and to announce a clear schedule for the development of the company and opening up of the corruption file, holding corrupt officials accountable and the dismissal of the General Commissioner of the Company.

On the fifth day the workers were surprised when they entered the company to find a number of workers known to be loyal to the administration holding batons and sticks with the excuse that they are expecting an attack by thugs on the company. They screamed at the workers to start working immediately saying "work so that they don't shut it down like they shut down the other companies, go work and preserve your livelihood" along with a torrent of insults to force the workers to work. The workers in their positions in every production ward were threatened that those who abstain from work "will pay for everything alone".

On January 20<sup>th</sup> after the strike was stopped 13 labour leaders in the company were referred to administrative interrogation in

the pretext that they instigated workers to strike and obstruct production. Foremost among the workers who are being investigated are Faisal Lkousha, Nagui Haidar, Wael Habib, Gamal Gad and Reda Abu Emira.

The strange thing is that the decision to fire the labour leaders Nagui Haidar and Gamal Gad came following the general assembly's decision to lay off the general commissioner Farag Awad and appointing a new commissioner, Engineer Ibrahim Bedair which asserts that the workers' demand to lay off the general commissioner and opening up the corruption files are legitimate demands. The 25000 workers in the company considered this a response to their demands and a new beginning with the company's administration. But the decision of the administration to lay off their colleagues raised a lot of question marks about the nature of the direction of the new administration.

The workers in the company were surprised on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 with a decision by the company to end the services of the labour leader Kamal Al Fayoumi under the pretense that he instigates workers to strike and obstruct production. Al Fayoumi thus followed his colleagues Nagui Haidar and Gamal Gad. The government thus decided to extend the current union term for an additional year and not hold the union elections that were scheduled in May which angered the workers of the company.

- Right before February 2015, in an attempt to silence the workers' demands that the company fulfill its promise to double the wages (the increase did not exceed 50% yet), the administration of Delta for mineral water in Sadat city fired two workers and a week later they fired one of the labour leaders. The workers of the company refused this and announced their solidarity with their colleagues and entered into an open strike inside the headquarters of the company in February 15<sup>th</sup> 2015.
- On February 18<sup>th</sup> 90 temporary workers entered into a hunger strike in Petro Shahd Company, a subtracted company working with one of the joint venture companies belonging to the Egyptian Authority for Petroleum, situated on the Bahriay Oasis road. This was in objection to the company's refusal to appoint them, with all the details of employment that include social insurance, a pension and health insurance. The repercussions of an accident that happened to one of their colleagues was in an accident with a microbus he was riding turned over when he was returning from his vacation in Upper Egypt. He had to bear the cost of his treatment in full without any assistance from the Petro Shahd that does not even consider that he is affiliated with them.
- On February 21<sup>st</sup> 2015 the head of the legal sector in the National Authority for Military Production ordered a deduction form the salaries of Magdi Abdel Daiyem (two days) and Gamal Salama (two days) and Mohamed Barakat (15 days) and five days from Shehata Abdalla who could not bear what

was happening and fell ill and died. This was according to a memo by the head of the general union for civilian workers in the military production supposedly for attempting to thwart the electoral conference that was held by the general union in cooperation with the heads of the boards of military factories for the general union's nominee in Helwan Magdy Al Badawi!!

"Shehta Abdalla" was the head of the union committee in military factory number 45 and was nominated by the workers of the factory for the parliamentary elections that took place at the end of 2015.

The roots of this incident go back to Monday December 29<sup>th</sup> 2014 when the general union held a labour conference in cooperation with the head of the board of the military factory 99 in Helwan entitled "Encouraging workers to produce in support of the Egyptian economy and to fight terrorism". The attendees from among the members of the union committees in the military factories were surprised to find that they were taken by company buses to the location of the conference in the Arab Ghoniem Club that is associated with Factory 99. The conference was attended by General Said Al Loua the president of Factory 99 and Gebaly Al Maraghi the head of the temporary administrative committee of the General Union of Egyptian Workers and Said Al Nakib the head of the General Union of civilian workers in military production and Mohamed Wahb Alla the secretary general of the General Union and Magdy Al Badawy the journalist and the vice president of the administrative committee and members of the local council. 250 luxurious meals were distributed. It had nothing to do with calls for increasing production or fighting terrorism but is an electoral conference to support the nomination of the journalist Magdy Al Badawy to the labour union.

Immediately Mohamed Ibrahim and Magdy Abdel Dayim and Shehta Abdalla and Gamal Salama objected and asserted that this is a labour conference to encourage workers to produce and not an electoral conference and announced that they refuse the nomination of a journalist as a representative of Helwan workers at a time when the workers agree on nominating Shehta Abdalla as their representative and criticized the opening up the headquarters of the local union in Helwan as an electoral headquarters for Magdy Al Badawy at a time when the general union is closing its doors in Helwan in the face of the workers.

This provoked the head of the general union so he presented a memo against them to the national committee of military production and accordingly they were referred to investigations that ended with deductions that led to Shehta falling ill and dying.

- On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2015 the labour leader in the steel and metal factory Mohamed Omar started a hunger strike to demand

that the harassment by the company's administration against him should stop. This harassment was to force him into early medical retirement. The latest of such harassment was the deduction of 70% of his monthly incentive. He was also suspended from work for more than two months and all his financial dues were stopped and then he was arbitrarily moved from the steel sector to the general workshops to work as a "pipes welder" which is a job that requires special skills. He was not even given any of the regular industrial protection tools causing him to suffer several burns in his hands and feet.

Mohamed Omar asserted that his transfer to the public workshops without giving him sufficient training and refusing to give him protection is only another attempt at killing him that is not less than the previous attempt last May when people unknown to him attacked him inside the company and almost killed him.

The general union for mineral industries froze the membership of Mohamed Omar who was a member of the union committee of the company and cancelled his full time work status in the union in response to him revealing the corruption in the company's administration and in the union on January 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014 by presenting a complaint to the public prosecutor number 1189 for the year 2014 against Mohamed Saad Nigida the president of the board. In this complaint he accused him of intentionally causing losses to the company. This accusation depended on the transgressions that appeared in the report of the Central Authority for Accounting which clearly showed that the losses of the company reached 92% of its capital at a cost of 892 million Egyptian Pounds. Omar asserted in his complaint that these losses are a result of mismanagement and corruption on the side of the company's administration that intends to obstruct the production of the company and decrease its volume with ill intentions for the benefit of competing companies. The administration of the company also distributed allocations and benefits to the members of the board despite the losses incurred by the company and all of that contrary to the law and other incidents that were revealed by the report of the Central Authority of Accounting.

- On March 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 four workers in the Metal and Steel mines in Bani Khaled in Menya Governorate entered into an open hunger strike. They are Murad Wahib Wahba, Wael Ibrahim Salem, Ahmed Mohamed Hassan Hamad and Said Yehia Hassan to demand a cancellation of their transferring orders issued as punishment for their participation in demonstrations demanding revenue shares of the previous year. Amr Helal, another worker in Suez governorate, soon joined them, raising the number of striking workers to five.

Amr Abdel Rashid Helal who entered a hunger strike in the Adabia quarries was also transferred on September 19<sup>th</sup> 2013 to Suez after expressing solidarity with his colleagues who demonstrated to demand the revenue loan. This was despite the worker's representative signing an agreement with the government represented by the ministers of social solidarity and the minister of industry after the workers ended their strike at the end of 2013. The agreement stated that a committee should be established to study the arbitrary transfer of workers but the administration of the company that had transferred more than 23 workers did not implement this.

- On April 5<sup>th</sup> 2015 the Egypt Gas Company refused to negotiate with representatives of the workers among the leaders of independent unions who asked for the internal statute of the company to be implemented and insisted to negotiate directly with the general union that belongs to the governmental General Union which is something that angered the workers who expressed their refusal to be represented by the General Union. They expressed their insistence on being represented by their colleagues among the members of the executive council of the independent union and tried turned their demonstration into a nationwide comprehensive strike.

The company's administration filed police reports against tens of labour leaders in the different areas accusing them of instigating workers to strike and vandalism. Shebin El Kom prosecutor office summoned three of the labour leaders to interrogate them about what was alleged against them and they were released pending their residency!!

The administration of the company then issued an announcement on the morning of April 22, 2015 calling workers to return to work and end their strike or else they will shut down the company and give the workers an open ended vacation. The workers subsequently filed a complaint with the ministry of labour proving the administrations abuse and refusal to negotiate and threatening to shut down the company.

- On Tuesday June 2 2015 when the workers gathered to express their discontent with the condition of medical care hours after a bloc of metal fell on the foot of one of their colleagues while it was being transferred because of the lack of equipment in the company. He was only helped by his colleagues who managed to lift the bloc and drag their injured friend. They waited for hours without ambulance or any assistance on the side of the administration only to be surprised with an armored military vehicle interfering to confront the protest of the workers. It fired shots in the air and the ground to terrorize the workers injuring one of them, Hisham Ramdan Al Said, killing him instantly and injuring three of his colleagues.

It is worth mentioning that the worker who was killed is one of the workers of Al Arish Cement that belongs to the armed forces. These workers and “contracted” workers provided to the company by “Gama” and “Siac” for providing labour.

- On the morning of June 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 more than 500 workers in the cultural labour institution announced a strike in front of the ministry of labour demanding that the decision by the higher council of universities to not accept high school graduates in the Labour University for this year be stopped until the conditions of the university are evaluated. Moreover there were complaints against the corruption in the cultural institution threatening to stop work in it and displace more than four thousand workers in the Cultural Labour Institution.

The striking workers demanded that those responsible for this corruption among the generals of the governmental trade union be held accountable and that the ownership of the Labour University be transferred to the ministry of higher education to preserve the livelihood of all these families.

In an attempt to break the strike, the minister of labour Nahed Ashry asked the striking workers to choose seven of them to meet with her and discuss the demands of the workers. When the delegation entered the ministry they were surprised that the minister told them that she will not meet them saying she will not sit with anyone until the “riffraff” end their strike. In compliance with the instructions of the minister, the security of the ministry assaulted the delegation!!

- With the increased support and solidarity with the independent unions in their call for what was known as the “Fustat million person march” on September 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, to reject the new civil service law (number 18 for the year 2015) issued on March 12<sup>th</sup> 2015 in place on law (47 for the year 1978) without any societal dialogue, the severity of security threats increased. There were threats to arrest members of the coordinating committee and participants in the march and sending unknown people to the march to spoil it.

On the specified date the security forces prevented many employees going to protest, from entering Al Fustat Park and closed down all roads leading to the place of the demonstration.

- On the morning of September 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, the workers of Exxon Mobil in Alexandria entered into an open strike to protest the laying off of one of their colleagues and the administration’s stubbornness and their prosecution of the workers in the oils warehouse in Al Max.

Engineer Ahmed Maher, the president of the warehouse in Al Max area of Alexandria had fired the workers Fayez Farag over the phone that same morning which angered the

workers in the warehouse and pushed them to strike under a unified demand which is the return of their colleague to work and ending the prosecution of workers.

On his side Shokry Ahmed Kishta, the head of the independent union of the workers in the Exxon Mobil said that the laying off of the worker is clear prosecution since it did not take place as a result of an investigation. He added that even if the worker had made a mistake, his immediate supervisor should punish him but not sack him. He also indicated that the fired worker, Fayez Farag did was not fined or punished in anyway but fired immediately which is something that the union rejects and will not allow. He also said the union is not against penalties as long as they come through legal channels.

- Because salaries were not paid for two consecutive months and workers suffered from the stalling of the administration that did not specify when the late salaries will be paid or what is the situation of the current salaries and the consecutive threats to shut down the factory once and for all and discharge them, the workers of Festival Textiles in Borg Al Arab in Alexandria filed a complaint number 937 against the administration of the factory at the labour office and filed a police report number 25 at Borg Al Arab police station.

The following morning, November 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, a subsequent to the filing of this complaint, 18 workers in the factory, that is more than half of the factory workers whose numbers do not exceed 30, found out that they were prevented from entering the factory and were suspended and referred to the legal affairs department to be interrogated in preparation for firing them. The administration of the factory actually issued a decision on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2015, laying off 10 of the 18 workers that were being investigated.

- On November 24<sup>th</sup> 2015 a number of workers in the Opera underground station entered into an open strike to object the decision of the president of the board of the Underground Metro to cancel the secondment of their colleague "Refaat Arafat" the head of the independent union of Underground Metro workers and sending him back to the Railway authority.

The decision of the head of the underground board to transfer the head of the independent union came about because the latter submitted files about the corruption in the company to the minister of transportation last week during a meeting between the minister and a large number of employees.

Ending the secondment of Arafat to the Metro is a violation of article 48 of the trade union law number 35 for the early 1976 that states that it is not permitted to transfer a board member of the union organization from the establishment inside or outside the city that his work place is in during the

union term except after his written approval which asserts the immunity of the union activist and the labour representative to help him preform his work in defending the interests of those who elected him.

- Huda Hamed Mohamed Hefni, a member of the independent teachers' union in Port Said entered a hunger strike that includes drinking and medication leading to her admittance to Al Mabara Hospital in Port Said. A complained about the incident was placed and numbered 446 and dated November 15<sup>th</sup> 2015. This was after an arbitrary decision by the governor of Port Said confirming the decision of the deputy minister of education in Port Said that ends her delegation to Port Said high school for girls and employing her as a deputy at Port Said Sports School for Girls although she has already been a school manager since 2010. A number of workers and unionized members the ministry of education held a demonstration on November 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 in solidarity with their colleague.

The incidents of this abuse go back to the decision to restore the premises of the Northern educational administration at a cost of 2.5 million pounds due to the age of the building and it being too small for the workers in the administration leading to moving them to different schools. Because the allocated budget is too large for the simple maintenance that is needed and nears the cost of building a new building, Mrs. Huda presented a memo to the minister of education at the time, Dr. Mahmoud Abul Nasr to pull down the building and build another new one suitable for the administration that is the largest in Port Said and that would accommodate all the workers in the administration. The minister approved that the ministry would bear the costs of building the new building and turned the memo over to the educational buildings department to get their opinion.

The problem started at that moment because the deputy of the ministry of education in Port Said was disturbed by Mrs. Huda's communication with the minister even though Huda sent her the memo first. This was because a businessman from Port Said was seeking to get the land of the Northern department because of its distinguished location. Al Shima primary school was to be the alternative location of the department. Accordingly her secondment as manager of the Northern department was cancelled and she was returned to her original job as manager of Port Said High School for Girls on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 by decision number (591 for the year 2014).

- In the morning of Tuesday September 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 the security forces of Al Fayoum Company for Sugar prevented seasonal workers from entering the premises of the company after the doors of the company were locked with metal chains. They

also assaulted one of the workers causing injuries in his stomach and foot.

Tens of seasonal workers had entered an open strike starting Saturday November 28<sup>th</sup> 2015 to demand temporary contracts and were surprised on November 30<sup>th</sup> that they were banned from entering the company but they managed to enter it after solidarity from their appointed colleagues. This was repeated on Tuesday. The administration of the company called for a force from Atsa police station claiming that the workers were rioting. A committee from the labour department came and listened to the workers and the administration of the company but was not able to solve the problem but did not make any decision that preserves the interests of the workers, just saying that they will do whatever is necessary.

- On September 13<sup>th</sup> 2015 and due to the extreme injustice and the lack of justice in distributing bonuses and incentives and ignoring compensating the workers and technicians and collectors working in bad climate whether due to high temperatures or rain while high ranking officials get exaggerated wages, incentives and bonuses, the workers entered into an open strike demanding four months wages as an excellence bonus that the head of the company's board, Amal Al Alimay, had paid to 2200 of the workers in the company that are close to him. This payment, termed an excellence bonus, was not paid to the rest of the workers in the company.

On December 17<sup>th</sup> 2015 the workers Karim Al Ashry was arrested while going to file a complaint at Al Montaza police station against the board of Petromid company and five other workers who was on their way to Al Shael police station to file a report to prove that they were prevented from signing in the attendance records to find that the company had filed a complaint against them accusing them of calling for a strike. Two workers in Al Haram Area, Zainab Omar and Ali Salem, were suspended as were six workers in Heliopolis, Abdel Hamid Nada, Reda Mohamed Hassan, Karim Ali Mohamed, Mohamed Abdel Moniem Abdel Rahman, Fathi Ashour Abdel Hamid and Ahmed Hussien Tawfiq as well as the suspension of two workers from the Faisal branch and ten from Al Omraniya, Faisal and Hadayek Al Ahram.

On December 21<sup>st</sup> the board of Petromid referred 144 workers to investigations including Karim Ashry who was arrested due to false accusations and released on the same day.

- On September 27<sup>th</sup> the administration of Shebin textiles issued a decision to fire five striking workers who demanded their late financial dues and laid out two of the members of the board and the head of the security of the company who injured over 15 workers. The workers insisted on continuing

their strike and increased their demands. Foremost among them was the return of the workers who had been fired on that same day and they warned the holding company against procrastination and warned that they will not give in to this.

The workers indicated that they will work on integrating the three shifts in the company in the 24 hours to research what the strike has achieved until then and the escalating steps that they will work on in the coming period of time. The workers raised many demands as a basic condition to return to work. Foremost among them was the dismissal of Atef Abdel Satar and Usama Khalaf from the company management. They also asked for the dismissal of Mostafa Makshat the head of the general security and referring him to investigation due to what he did with the workers in their previous strike. Additionally they also asked for the social raise stipulated by the state retrospective from the beginning of July as well as paying the fourths instalment of the annual bonus that was supposed to be paid last October in addition to paying the share of the contributors' union, that is the workers' share in the shares of the company. Moreover they demanded the return of all security guards against whom arbitrary decrees were issued to move them away from production and laying off all those who were appointed by nepotism and granting the financial levels to the batch of workers that had been transferred. The workers demanded that the production rates be amended calculating it by kilometer for the drivers and paying a development bonus as is the case with the other companies working in textiles and weaving and to amend the production bonus, paying allowances for the workers who underwent operations from the solidarity fund of the union. They also asked for an amendment of the penalties statute of the company and deducting the taxes from the worker's basic salary and appointing the temporary workers.

- On December 29<sup>th</sup> 2015 the workers of the Al Rehab city council demonstrated in front of the premises of the council against the vice president of the company for tourism establishments, Mustafa Hedaya who fired 17 security supervisors without a clear reason and agreed with private companies to clean the garages as temporary labour in exchange for meager wages so that he can get rid of the insured workers who work under annual contracts that reach 15 years. The workers asked for their contracts to be amended to open ended contracts and the return of their laid off colleagues

**The Center for Trade Union and Worker Services**  
**Sunday January 3, 2016**