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DATE  
2011-09-05

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Mr. Essam Sharaf, Prime Minister  
Magless El Shaàb Street  
Al Kasr El Einy  
CAIRO  
Egypt

## **Egypt – Trade Union Rights**

Dear Prime Minister Sharaf,

I am writing to you on behalf of The Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO), representing more than 1.5 million members, to express our concern regarding the continued lack of trade union rights in Egypt. For years, workers have struggled for the creation of decent work in a country where low wages and abysmal working conditions were the norm. The near total absence of independent trade unions made changing that situation extremely difficult, leaving millions of workers with little hope for a better life.

Important changes are now underway. Earlier this month, the interim government disbanded the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) board, effectively ending the hegemony of the official trade union and opening up space for independent trade unions to form and to operate openly. The interim government also recently instituted a new minimum wage of 700 LE to take effect in October 2011 for most employers in most sectors. These moves are welcome.

However, we remain deeply concerned that two laws which severely restrict trade union freedoms remain in place today, namely the Trade Unions Act No. 35/1976 and Decree No. 34/2011, which criminalizes strikes. I understand that the Labour Minister has recently circulated a draft of a new Freedom of Association Law. We urge you to ensure that the law fully complies with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 87 and Convention 98, and is the result of full consultation with social partners – including, of course, independent trade unions.

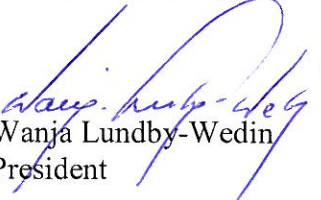
POSTAL ADDRESS 105 53 Stockholm  
OFFICE ADDRESS Barnhusgatan 18  
TELEPHONE +46 8 796 25 00 TELEFAX +46 8 24 52 28  
E-MAIL mailbox@lo.se HOMEPAGE www.lo.se

**The Swedish Trade Union Confederation**

Egypt's workers have waited far too long to see their fundamental rights realized in law and practice. We sincerely hope that they need not have to wait much longer.

Yours sincerely,

THE SWEDISH TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (LO)

  
Wanja Lundby-Wedin  
President