



WFTU

ASIA PACIFIC REGIONAL OFFICE

(World Federation of Trade Unions)

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To,

All the WFTU Affiliated Unions
of Asia Pacific Region

WFTU APRO EXPRESSES ITS DEEP SHOCK AT THE LOSS OF LIVES OF THE WORKERS IN THE DEVASTATING FIRE AT THE LABOUR CAMP IN KUWAIT

WFTU APRO expresses its deep shock, convey our profound sorrow on the loss of lives of the workers in the devastating fire at a labour camp in Kuwait. The plight of migrant workers are always in danger, due to unemployment problems the poor workers are desperate to get some job and their poverty and weakness are completely exploited. Safety at the workplaces and the camps in which the migrant workers are staying are always compromised. WFTU APRO convey its deepest condolences to the bereaved family and demand appropriate compensation from the concerned Governments and the Employer.

112th Session of the International Labour Conference of ILO and the Intervention and Activities of WFTU in the 112th Session of the ILC / ILO

The 112th Session of the International Labour Conference of ILO was held at Geneva from 3rd to 14th June 2024. Government, Employer and Worker Delegates from the ILO's 187 Members Countries participated and addressed a wide range of issues which includes the Protection of Workers against the effects of Climate Change and Biological Hazards, the Care Economy and Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work.

In the 112th Session of the ILO representatives from the WFTU Headquarters including General Secretary Comrade Pambis Kyritsis were present in the session other than the representatives of WFTU affiliates of different countries. The WFTU delegation played a major role in the entire session of the ILO. The following conference was separately organized by the WFTU during the 112th session

WFTU's International Conference on Democratic Freedoms and Trade Union Rights

The above conference organized by the WFTU was held on 11th of June 2024. The Report of the same is published below.

The World Federation of Trade Unions held its International Conference on Democratic Freedoms and Trade Union rights on June 11th, within the framework of the 112th ILC.

WFTU's General Secretary, Pambis Kyritsis, delivered his introductory speech welcoming WFTU's affiliates and friends that participated in the conference, analyzing the global situation, and the dangers of the rising attacks against the sacred right to strike, as well as the attack against the social and political achievements of the working class, giving the general framework of the conference's discussion.

In his turn comrade Janaka Adikari, head of the WFTU's democratic and trade unions rights committee, analyzed the importance of democratic and trade union freedoms, pointing out the necessity to defend the right of the workers to strike and organize, to safeguard their social and political achievements and their future struggles.

Participating in the discussion panel Mr. Giorgos Bithimitris, Senior Researcher at the National Centre for Social Research of Greece, analyzed the importance of democratic freedoms and trade union rights in the social coherence and social justice context, highlighting the crucial role that democratic rights and trade union freedoms play protecting the working class.

After the keynote speakers' interventions, a round of discussion took place, where tens of participants from all over the world discussed and analyzed the different situations in each region.

You can read the full speeches of the keynote speakers below:

Speech of Pambis Kyritsis, General Secretary of the WFTU

First of all, let me welcome all the participants to today's International Conference.

On behalf of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), I extend a cordial, warm, and militant greeting.

It is encouraging and hopeful that each time this meeting is held here in Geneva, we are more and more. This indicates that the class message of struggle and the demands of the WFTU finds continuously more and more response among the workers and their Trade Unions. In defense of their own genuine class interests, away from bureaucratic leaderships and yellow unions that undermine the efficiency and struggling ability of workers.

The 112th International Labour Conference (ILC) is taking place at a time when the nature of imperialism is once again fully revealed in all its hypocrisy, cynicism, and inhumanity.

We strongly and unequivocally condemn the genocide and the ethnic cleansing conducted in Palestine by the Israel murderous state. These crimes are committed with the provocative tolerance and support that Israel receives from the USA, the European Union, and the rest of their allies.

The WFTU stands by the Palestinian people, and we are proud that millions of workers around the world are mobilizing, with the WFTU flags, in solidarity with them.

It is evident that as the capitalist crisis deepens and expands, exploitation and attacks on the living standards of workers intensify.

As the greed of monopolies for more profits grows, so does the attack against the rights of organization, collective bargaining, and striking become more intense and harsher.

This is why we have chosen to organize an International Conference in Geneva this year, focusing on the struggle for the defense of trade union freedoms and particularly the sacred right to strike.

The current global situation is characterized by the generalization and deepening of the capitalist crisis and the dramatic widening of social inequalities. The high cost of living and inflation are severely undermining the living standards of workers and pensioners.

Trade union freedoms and the democratic rights of the workers have been under severe attack in recent years.

Whether through direct repression with authoritarian police measures, through trials and courts, or through political and economic coercions of EU Memoranda, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, or through neoliberal maneuvers in the name of the free market and employer coercions and prohibitions, the right to organization and collective bargaining, and the right to strike, are always targeted. And certainly, at the political level, the right to mobilization, demonstration, and protest. There are many examples, and I am confident that during today's conference, we will hear even more through the information we will receive.

We cannot separate the attack on trade union freedoms and workers' democratic rights from the attack on the standard of living, wages, pensions, social security, and, in general, anything that constitutes a "cost" for the employers and states, and inevitably limits the profits and super-profits of monopolies. As the capitalist crisis deepens and the competition among capitalists becomes more fierce and relentless, the attack on democratic and trade union rights and freedoms will also become harsher and more direct. This is because, through organization, solidarity, collective bargaining, and the weapon of the strike, the working class can resist the degradation of living and working conditions imposed by capitalists to burden workers with the consequences of the capitalist crisis and to maintain and increase their profits.

Individual contracts, privatizations, outsourcing, teleworking, and "service leasing" are just some forms taken by the harsh neoliberal attack.

For the WFTU, it is clear that only through struggles can workers build a militant front capable of defending their rights and pave the way for a different course that leads to peace, social justice, and the abolition of exploitation. Solidarity and internationalism are their weapons.

One of the fields of struggle for the World Trade Union Movement is the International Labour Organization (ILO). Of course, we have no illusions. Today's ILO, in the era of capitalist globalization and the dominance of harsh neoliberalism, certainly does not meet the demands and expectations of workers. It has clearly retreated in terms of its role and effectiveness compared to what it was in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. The more pleasant the slogans for consumption become, the more the content and impact of its decisions on the protection of labor rights and collective bargaining are shrinking and become limited.

At a time when it is evident globally that labor relations are continuously deregulated, collective negotiations are shrinking, collective agreements are violated, stable and permanent employment is being replaced with so-called "flexible" forms, when child labor, instead of being eradicated, is

making a fierce comeback, and public utilities and other social enterprises are rapidly privatized, the ILO's slogan for 'decent' work and the new slogan for the 'new social contract' are evidently empty in practice.

What workers need are rights, measures that counter exploitation and social inequality, that practically support organization, collective bargaining, and collective agreements, and that limit the greed of monopolies for more and more profits at the expense of wages, health, insurance, and generally the quality of life of those who create wealth through their labor.

Today, we are pleased to have with us, besides trade union leaders from around the world with valuable experiences on the issue of the struggle for the protection of democratic and trade union rights of the workers, two distinguished comrades who are prepared to speak as key speakers to provide input for discussion at today's conference.

The first is Comrade Janaka Antikari, who is the head of the Committee created by the WFTU a few years ago, and is consisted of comrades dealing with issues of democratic and trade union rights.

This Committee recently approved the WFTU's written statement to the International Court of Human Rights in The Hague, regarding the interpretation requested by the ILO Governing Body on whether Convention 87 on "the freedom of association" inherently covers the right to strike, something that, as is known, the employer group at the ILO provocatively and absurdly disputes.

I believe it is an opportunity in the context of today's conference to discuss the enhancement of the role of this committee led by Comrade Antikari and what other specific measures we can take to be able to provide not only moral but also practical support wherever and whenever our comrades trade unionists face government and employer authoritarianism and repression.

The second speaker is the academic, George Bithymitris, Senior Researcher in the National Centre for Social Research of Greece, who kindly travelled here to Geneva, to participate in this Conference and contribute with his knowledge and expertise to enrich the discussion we are about to have.

On behalf of everyone, I thank him warmly.

I regret that the time available to us is short. It barely exceeds 2 hours, therefore I kindly ask the key speakers and those who will later take the floor to be brief and concise so that everyone who wishes can have their contribution.

With that said, I first give the floor to comrade Janaka Antikari for his speech.

Speech of Janaka Adikari, head of the WFTU's democratic and trade unions rights committee

Introduction

The Imperialists, capitalists, employers, and their agents have sparked an unnecessary debate on a straightforward matter. That is, the right to strike is not protected by the ILO Convention 87.

We are well aware that every democratic society acknowledges workers' and people's democratic rights, including freedom of association and protection of the right to organize, including the Right to strike.

The right to strike is safeguarded by national statutes and court systems. Strikes and collective actions have played a crucial role in advocating for freedom of association and the right to organize.

Strikes are a powerful tool in bargaining and their absence weakened and /or abolished the right to organize and collective bargaining.

Would the union movement ever accept constitutionalizing the right to organize without the right to strike?

This would never occur unless employers or capitalists sit on the workers' seats.

Clear definitions of what a strike is

Examining the definitions of a strike, it becomes evident that it is inherently linked to the right to organize. A strike is an organized action by employees. A strike is the most powerful way for workers to show their power of organization.

The Legal definitions and interpretations of a strike consistently highlight its role as an organizing activity for employees and trade unions.

*According to Black's Law Dictionary strike is an **organized Cease or slowdown of work** by employees to compel the employer to make the employees demands.*

Section 246 of the UK's Trade Unions and Labour Relations Act defines a strike as follows:;

*".....Any **concerted course of conduct by employees** which is carried on with a view to compelling their employer or any person or body of persons to accept or not accept terms or conditions of or affecting employment".*

he Oxford Dictionary defines a strike as;

*"A period of time when an **organized group** of employees of a company stops working because of their disagreement over pay or conditions".*

Clearly, workers' right to organize inherently encompasses the right to strike.. Otherwise, strikes are clearly a tool that workers can use to win rights over their wages or working conditions within the right to organize.

*The right to organize was secured and codified through the efforts of unions and workers' groups, including the hundreds of strikes. **The trade union movement will not compromise with anyone to waive the right to strike under any circumstances.***

Trade unions will not compromise on the right to strike.

Hence, we emphasize that the employer's argument within the ILO—claiming that the right to strike is not covered by the freedom of association and protection of the right to organize (Convention 87)—holds no merit.

The argument of employers is empty and hollow

As previously mentioned, ILO Convention 87 represents not merely a gift but a historic triumph for workers and progressive movements after decades of struggle.

During the late 19th and early 20th centuries, industrialization led to significant changes in the world of work. The workers faced harsh conditions, long hours, low wages and limited rights.

The significant changes brought about by industrialization during the 19th and early 20th centuries placed immense pressure on the working class. In essence, workers were ruthlessly exploited, treated merely as inputs in the production process—commodities for capitalists.

Labor movements and progressive forces arose to champion improved working conditions, fair wages, and workers' right to organize.

Recognition of workers' rights became an undeniable reality through the sacrifices made during uprisings, strikes, and ongoing struggles.

The employers who argue today have forgotten this history.

Although capitalists may wish to forget their shameful and ugly history, We refuse to let working people forget the history of their hard-won rights.

World War I (1914) and World War II (1939) both reflected the crisis within the capitalist system. Dictatorships and fascism curtailed the rights of the general population, including workers and trade unions, including the workers and trade unions. But labour movements and progressive forces fought against capitalist dictatorship and fascism. Millions of lives were sacrificed. International conventions regarding the right to organize are rooted in this historical context. Hence, employers' argument that workers' and trade unions' right to strike is not confirmed by ILO Convention 87 lacks substance and is an insult.

The ILO Convention 87(1948) based on the Philadelphia Declaration of 1944.

The Philadelphia Declaration emphasized key principles, including the recognition that labor is not a commodity and the importance of freedom of expression and association.

The Philadelphia Declaration underscores the need for effective international and national action to achieve these fundamental goals. The Philadelphia declaration highlights that the labour is not commodity. Therefore, laborers and workers must be treated equally, and successful collective bargaining requires the right to strike in the hands of trade unions and workers

The heavy weapon of the employer and the heavy weapon of trade union

*Employers have the right to terminate employment based on employee misconduct. It is recognized in industrial law that the punishment of termination of employment is **second Capital punishment**. Given the employer's significant power in such matters, social justice demands an equal right of action against employers who treat employees or trade unions unfairly and unjustly.*

Recognizing workers' right to organize entails acknowledging their ability to demand fair wages and working conditions. Additionally, workers have the right to collectively act against employers who fail to meet their fair demands. A strike involves a temporary work stoppage based on reasonable grounds. Without recognizing the right to strike within the framework of freedom of association and the right to organize, Convention 87 would lose its effectiveness.

The reason to attack the right to strike is the capitalist Crisis.

What is the real reason for the capitalist to attack the right to strike? It is the capitalists' crisis. We can discuss the crisis of capitalism through three main factors.

Overproduction

- *Overproduction occurs when the capitalist system produces more goods and services than can be effectively consumed or absorbed by the market. This surplus leads to economic instability, as demand cannot keep up with supply.*
- *In such a scenario, employers may seek to cut costs, including reducing wages or limiting workers' rights, to maintain profitability.*

Profit Rate Collapse:

1. *The profit rate—the ratio of profits to invested capital—can decline due to various factors, including increased competition, technological changes, or declining demand.*
2. *To counter falling profits, capitalists may attempt to suppress labor costs, impacting workers' wages and rights.*

Breakdown of Proportions:

1. *The proportions between different sectors of the economy (such as manufacturing, services, and finance) can become imbalanced. This can lead to economic instability.*
2. *When sectors are out of balance, workers in certain industries may face greater challenges, affecting their rights and well-being.*

These are inherent characteristics of the capitalist system. Due to these inherent characteristics, the capitalist class prioritizes profit and continually seeks to maximize it.

As mentioned earlier, the entire capitalist economic system is currently in crisis. Vast wealth is concentrated within a small number of corporations.

Workers do not receive a fair share of production.

Under imperialism—the zenith of the capitalist economic system—workers' conditions have worsened.

What is imperialism? Imperialism, viewed economically, represents monopoly capitalism. Its main feature is monopolistic subjugation.

What has happened to the workers under imperialism?

Real wages for workers have declined, resulting in reduced purchasing power.

In February 1973, it was \$23.24. By March 2019, it remained at a similar level (\$23.24, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, USA)

Simultaneously, the unemployment rate in the USA remains elevated. In 1950, it was nearly eight percent. In 1976 it marked nearly nine percent. In 2007- 2008, it was 10%. In 2020 April, the unemployment rate is 14.7%. In 2022 it is reported as 3.6%. Clearly, the US economy—the epitome of powerful imperialism—is highly volatile and unstable. most powerful imperialist, is very unstable and fluctuates.

Globally, real wage growth has been outpaced by inflation (CPI), leading to a decline in living standards.

According to the Global Wage Report 2022-23 by the ILO It says "... A quick glance at the news in most Countries shows that more headlines are now devoted to soaring inflation and its impact on the purchasing power of households than to the effect of the COVID-19 crisis. As suggested by the available data, consumer price had been on the rise throughout 2021 and have continued to increase even faster since the start of 2022".

Regarding global wage trends, the Global Wage Report 2022-2023 from the ILO indicates that global real wage growth during the first half of 2022 is estimated to decline to -1.4%. It's worth noting that China, where wage growth typically exceeds the global average, is excluded from this computation.

Economic recessions occur cyclically, approximately every 5 to 10 years within the capitalist economic system. It can be seen in specific cases in each country and we are experiencing it in general on a global scale.

As part of the trade union movement, we recognize how the capitalist class intensifies exploitation following each recession.

During the years 2007 and 2008, an economic recession occurred due to the collapse of the American economy. During the 2019-2020 the World Economic collapses due to the Corona 19 pandemic. Due to the Russian – Ukraine war Setbacks are happening in the World Economic process. Cause of all these recessions not an error of workers and/or trade unions, but it is a feature of the capitalist economic system. All the wars in the world are the wars of imperialism and capitalism and they are not the people's wars.

"However, in each case, capitalists have shifted the burden of losses onto workers. The crisis is inherent to the capitalist system. These wars were initiated by capitalists and imperialists to divide the global market. While crises originate from capitalists and imperialists, working people bear the brunt of their consequences.

Capital accumulation refers to the expansion of capitalists' wealth.

Capital accumulation basically means the growth of the capitalists' wealth. Capital accumulation has contradictory effects on the conditions of the working class.

According to reports published by 'OXFAM,' a renowned international organization, the inequality in the distribution of wealth is huge. OXFAM reports that the world's five wealthiest individuals have more than doubled their fortunes from \$405 billion to \$869 billion since 2020, accumulating wealth

at a staggering rate of \$14 million per hour while nearly 5 billion people have been made poorer. According to OXFAM, if current trends persist, the world will witness its first trillionaire within a decade, yet poverty will persist for another 229 years.

OXFAM reveals that a total of 148 major corporations raked in \$1.8 trillion in profits, a 52% increase over the three-year average. Meanwhile, these companies distributed substantial payouts to wealthy shareholders, even as hundreds of millions experienced reductions in real wages.

In a capitalist system, the accumulation of capital and social wealth coincides with rising unemployment, leading to increased impoverishment..

Amidst the growing social crisis, workers and trade unions continue their struggle against exploitation, advocating for a fair distribution of production.

It cannot be avoided.

Consequently, the pressure on capitalists, imperialists, employers, and their representatives to undermine workers and trade unions intensifies each day.

As previously discussed, the most potent tool in the Working People's arsenal—ensuring 'Freedom of Association and protection of the right to organize'—is the 'right to strike'.

In an egregiously unfair and unequal socio-economic system, any efforts to strip workers of their right to strike within the framework of organizing must be vehemently opposed.

Some new strategies of Capital

Amidst their crisis, imperialists and their agents seek to introduce new legislation at the national level, often misinterpreting existing statutes. One of their efforts involves attacking the principles outlined in the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 87. They reinterpret this convention, claiming that it does not explicitly confirm or cover the right to strike under the freedom of association and the protection of the right to organize.

Additionally, they exert pressure on bourgeois governments to impose new laws and regulations that enable them to intensify exploitation. We see examples of this in Sri Lanka, India, Greece, Europe, and other regions. The capitalists' aim is to undermine the rights of trade unions, particularly the right to strike.

On the other hand, capitalists and imperialists are adopting new methods to maximize their profits. One such method is recruiting workers through third-party agencies. Manpower companies play a significant role in this process, often prioritizing capital interests over worker rights. They avoid taking responsibility for workers' well-being, focusing solely on protecting their profits.

Furthermore, emerging categories of workers—such as online workers, e-workers, gig workers and platform workers—are denied basic labor rights. Capital-employed platforms often deny the existence of an employer-employee relationship, further exacerbating the exploitation faced by these workers.

Conclusion

Certainly! The World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) plays a crucial role in advocating for workers' rights and promoting a class-oriented approach. By fully supporting the interpretation of the Committee of Experts regarding the application of ILO Convention 87, the WFTU reinforces the importance of workers' freedom of association and the right to organize.

ILO Convention 87, titled "Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise," is a significant international labor standard. It recognizes the fundamental rights of workers to form and join trade unions, engage in collective bargaining, and take collective action, including the right to strike. The Committee of Experts provides authoritative interpretations of these conventions to guide their implementation at the national level.

As a militant and class-oriented movement, the WFTU's endorsement of the Committee's interpretation underscores its commitment to workers' empowerment and solidarity. By standing up for workers' rights, the WFTU contributes to a fairer and more just global labor landscape.

Long live WFTU

Long live International Solidarity of Workers

Speech of Giorgos Bithimitris, Senior Researcher – National Centre for Social Research of Greece

It is an honor to be here today at this esteemed international conference, organized by the World Federation of Trade Unions in the occasion of the 112th Session of the International Labour Conference. I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the organizers, and the entire organizing committee, for inviting me to speak today.

As many of you might have noticed in similar events in the past, academics and scholars feel strongly obliged to begin their lecture with definitions of the key-concepts of the matter at hand. I won't be an exception, so I'd like to straightforwardly address the topic of this session, which concerns the democratic rights and the trade union freedoms. Beginning with the latter, we could stick to the definition given by the emblematic human rights document – the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted in 1948:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. No one may be compelled to belong to an association."[\[1\]](#)

In particular, as it is put by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights:

"The right of peaceful assembly includes the right to hold meetings, sit-ins, strikes, rallies, events or protests, both offline and online. The right to freedom of association involves the right of individuals to interact and organize among themselves to collectively express, promote, pursue and defend common interests. This includes the right to form trade unions. Freedom of peaceful assembly and of association serve as a vehicle for the exercise of many other rights guaranteed under international law, including the rights to freedom of expression and to take part in the conduct of public affairs."[\[2\]](#)

From a legal perspective, there is, of course, some tension between the notion of freedom and the notion of rights.[3] However, for the purposes of this session, we can agree that our focal point is democratic rights as manifested in the form of trade union freedoms. After all, according to the resolution 2002/46 of the UN's Commission on Human Rights, the freedom of association constitutes an essential element of democracy.

If this is the case, then one would expect that -globally speaking- trade union freedoms can only make progress, as far as democracy itself is less and less challenged as a generic form of governance that depends on the will of the people. Only that ... it isn't. Democracy across the world is in decline. All metrics used by the methodologically robust comparative research project "Varieties of Democracy" (V-Dem), show a rollback of democratic rights and institutions.[4] According to the V-DEM 2024 Report, the level of democracy enjoyed by the average person in the world in 2023 is down to 1985-levels; by country-based averages, it is back to 1998.[5] It is not only freedom of expression, and clean elections that are affected, but also, freedom of association, which according to the V-DEM Report is the third most deteriorating component.[6]

But this is only half of the story. The rest is even more worrying. Liberal democracies more often than not are boasting for their performance in democratic indicators, but in 2023 according to the Global Rights Index of ITUC[7]:

- *72% of the countries in Europe violated the right to strike.*
- *54% of countries in Europe violated the right to collective bargaining.*
- *41% of countries in Europe excluded workers from the right to establish and join a trade union. Cases of union busting have been reported in the Netherlands, Switzerland, Belgium, Portugal, Greece, Hungary and many other countries.*
- *In Europe more than 1 out of 10 Workers experienced violent attacks.*

In all the above mentioned indicators, the situation in the Americas (North and South) was even worse.

My argument must have become clear by now. If these indicators that concern the working classes and their capacity to collectively influence the decisions made at the production sphere are worsening, both in liberal and illiberal regimes; and if at the same time the sensitivity of the modern societies on values such as freedom, equality, and social justice has been sharpened up, then the key to understanding this rollback should be sought in one major institution that has historically been at odds with trade union freedoms and workplace democracy, even in its most glorious and revolutionary moments.: the capitalist market.

Even a brief socio-historical account of this modern institution would throw us off the track. What I find useful here is a tentative explanation of why contemporary capitalist markets are becoming more hostile not only to trade unions but also to any collective attempts to influence, regulate, or control the exchanges between capital and labor.

To get a better grasp of this enmity, I will use the following metaphor: Most of us who live in a big city have found ourselves looking at a red traffic light with impatience, nervousness, or anger.

Sometimes this traffic signal looks like the only obstacle between our car and the desired destination. More than that, we perceive it as an obstacle to our freedom to accelerate, drive fast, and grab faster what we desire: a coffee, a lunch with our friends, or a nice parking lot near the workplace. What we usually miss in this line of thinking is that the red traffic light (along with other parameters of course) actually ensures our safe and timely arrival at our destination in at least two ways: First, it prevents accidents (by default accidents interrupt any kind of motion), and second, it regulates the city's traffic as a whole, so that bottlenecks and other disturbances are avoided. Just consider the confusion that is caused, when the traffic signals of your city go out due to a power outage.

In modern societies, or to be sociologically more precise, in late modern societies, an escalatory capitalist regime is both the cause and the consequence of this specific way of looking at the traffic light as if it were an enemy. In a regime of hypercompetition, where people, companies, schools, cities, and states compete with each other in a continuous, exhaustive, and escalating struggle for a greater share of both the material and immaterial worlds, it is difficult not to misrecognize others as enemies. Any barrier standing between the subjects and their drive to appropriate more and more in a shorter and shorter period of time, be it physical resources, natural goods, or competencies, has to be removed.

Great social thinkers of our time have spoken of the structural condition of late modern societies, which is dynamization, along with its cognate term, dynamic stabilization.^[8] Dynamization denotes the inherent tendency toward escalation rooted in the fact that the social formation of modernity cannot stabilize itself except dynamically.^[9] This means that the modern capitalist society, in order to reproduce itself, must forever be expanding, growing and innovating, even beyond the limit that prevents growth from being catastrophic in what regards the environment, democracy, mental health, and economy itself.

The so-called poly-crisis, or perma-crisis can be seen as manifestations of this structural predisposition toward escalation. The overlapping crises that we witness from the Great Recession of 2008 onwards, feed and are fed by political and institutional arrangements that promise and deliver more openness for the markets, less restrictions to the flows of capital, less time-consuming democratic procedures, and thus, less rank-and-file participation, less regulation, and less collective negotiation. To return to the aforementioned analogy, isn't the inherent and irrevocable tendency toward capitalist escalation, analogous to the volition to abolish traffic lights as a means to commute faster? And aren't the social, environmental, and psychological threats stemming from the removal of 'barriers' such as trade unions and working-class mobilization analogous to the harm we would cause ourselves if we removed all traffic signals??

Although both upper and popular classes enter this resource-oriented hypercompetition, with similar drives -desire for appropriation of an ever-expanding share of the world, and fear of being left behind- neither the price that is paid is equal, nor the responsibility from this mess is symmetrically allocated. But most importantly, not all the social classes would benefit in the same way, if, say, the ideal of the fastest commute was radically challenged.

Let us take first the upper classes. Not so long ago, those activists, or intellectuals that used to oppose the shocking inequalities of global capitalism, were criticizing the 1% of the population that

lives at the expense of the 99%. Today social scientists assert that "the most important changes have taken place at the very top of the income distribution, between the richest 1% and the rest – and between the 0.1% or 0.01% and the rest"[10].

I am not going to bore you with statistics that show how the global inequality changed its shape, with class inequalities within nation-states sidelining the centuries-long inequalities between nation-states. However impressive, the extreme concentration of wealth and income is the top of the iceberg of inequality. In the extreme capitalism of late modernity labour markets, as well as other spheres and cultural institutions such as education, urban design, Media, sports and consumption, operate in a 'winner-take-all' mode.[11] *The educated, mobile middle classes of the globalized and networked metropolitan centres are admittedly less subject to extremely alienating conditions, such as occupational hazards, unemployment risks, poor living standards, racism, sexism, and exploitation. The climate change, and the neoliberal green agenda exacerbate existing divisions between metropolitan areas with sufficient green infrastructure dwelled by upper middle classes, and areas exposed to air pollution and heat, destined mainly for the popular classes (this is the so-called green gentrification effect).*

So, if they feel, and if -in certain aspects- they are victorious in the context of escalation and acceleration, why should the capitalists and the upper-middle classes bother themselves with trade union collective mandates, regulations, and other red traffic lights? From the era that young Karl Marx was writing the Philosophical Manuscripts back in the 1840s, we know that alienation will come after them too, no doubt about it. But this is a price that the late modern winners are willing to pay. They go to the shrine, they consume ethically, they resort to charities, and volunteering, they save their souls through the Arts, and they even call on governments to make them pay more tax.[12] *All the more so, capitalists and their upper middle-class friends, do not need to wait for the neoliberal promise of removing traffic signals to be realized. In a sense, they don't even need pure neoliberalism, insofar as they have mainstream parties of the centre-left and the centre-right to do the job, which is quite simple: to turn a blind eye to the red-light violations; to tolerate the silencing of trade union voices, the dismantling of collective bargaining, the violation of the right to participate to militant associations, the restriction of the right to take industrial action and so on and so forth.*

Dear members of the World Federation of Trade Unions, dear trade unionists and participants, you know better than me, how to fight against these and other violations, how to establish democratic rights in the workplace, how to defend the right to freedom of association, even if nation-states and governments stand indifferent, or hostile to your struggles. What I would really like to share with you today is the awareness that the struggles for workplace democracy, the struggles for trade union freedoms, are inextricably connected with a vision for a different mode of relating to the world, based on the human desire to be meaningfully, and not instrumentally, connected with other people, with objects, with nature, with our own selves. Thank you very much.

[1] This minimal definition can be found here: <https://www.rights.in.ua/en/rights/freedom-of-assembly-and-association>

[2] <https://www.ohchr.org/en/peaceful-assembly>

[3] See also the *European Industrial Relations Dictionary*, as suggested by the European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions (Eurofound): "Freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association are individual freedoms which are protected by all the international texts on the protection of human rights and by national constitutions." Eurofound (2018), *Right to constitute and freedom to join trade unions*, *European Industrial Relations Dictionary*, Dublin

<https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/en/european-industrial-relations-dictionary/right-constitute-and-freedom-join-trade-unions>

[4] Nord, Marina, Martin Lundstedt, David Altman, Fabio Angiolillo, Cecilia Borella, Tiago Fernandes, Lisa Gastaldi, Ana Good God, Natalia Natsika, and Staffan I. Lindberg. 2024. *Democracy Report 2024: Democracy Winning and Losing at the Ballot*. University of Gothenburg: V-Dem Institute.

[5] *Ibid*, p. 6.

[6] V-DEM applies a broader definition of freedom of association, capturing not only the extent to which civil society organizations (e.g. trade unions) can form and operate freely, but also the extent to which parties are allowed to form and to participate in elections. *Ibid*, p. 15. In 2023 things were worsening in both dimensions.

[7] 2023 ITUC Global Rights Index, *The world's worst countries for workers Executive Summary*, International Trade Union Confederation. Available here: https://files.mutualcdn.com/ituc/files/2023_ituc_global_rights_index_en.pdf (last accessed 2 June 2024).

[8] Hartmut Rosa, Klaus Dörre, & Stephan Lessenich, *Appropriation, Activation and Acceleration: The Escalatory Logics of Capitalist Modernity and the Crises of Dynamic Stabilization*. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 34(1), 53-73, 2017.

[9] Hartmut Rosa, *Resonance: a sociology of our relationship to the world*, trans. J. Wagner, Polity, Cambridge 2019

[10] Göran Therborn, *Class in the 21st century*, *New Left review*, 78, November-December 2012.

[11] Robert Frank and Philip Cook, *The Winner-Take-All Society: Why the Few on the Top Get so Much More Than the Rest of Us*, London, Virgin Books 2010. See also, Andreas Reckwitz, *The End of Illusions: Politics, Economy, and Culture in Late Modernity*, transl. V.A. Pakis, London, Polity 2021.

[12] <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/jan/19/millionaires-call-on-governments-worldwide-to-tax-us-now>

WFTU's Intervention at the Special Sitting on "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories" on the framework of the 112th ILC

In the above session, Comrade Petros Petrou cadre of WFTU Headquarters delivered his speech on WFTU's Intervention at the Special Sitting on "The situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories". Details and his speech is published here.

Through the intervention the WFTU reiterated on its position in solidarity and support to the Palestinian people to gain their freedom, and condemned equal distance stance, equating the perpetrators with the victims. It was also noted that the report of the General Director of the ILO regarding the situation of workers of the occupied Arab territories did not contain any effective measure against Israel, while in other cases there are excessive relevant reports and decisions, something that, once again, underlines the political criteria and selective sensibilities within the ILO.

You can read the full intervention below:

Dear delegates and colleagues,

The WFTU considers the Governing Body's recommendation to discuss this report in the framework of a special Sitting to be the least we could do amid the current developments.

The Palestinian cause has always been a priority for us, and we remain firm and proud of our principled positions and action. During the last months, our federation launched and implemented 4 international campaigns and several solidarity calls, in which millions of workers were mobilized under the WFTU flags while a WFTU solidarity visit to Palestine of a high-level delegation will take place in the last week of June. The WFTU strongly condemns the genocide, ethnic cleansing, and daily crimes conducted by Israel in Palestine, with the provocative tolerance and support of the USA, the EU, and their allies. We regret to note that not everyone can feel proud within the International Trade Union Movement; Some have lost their voice and remain silent or insist on an equal distance stance, equating the perpetrators with the victims.

This report confirms and records the conducted crimes, and unacceptable conditions in the Palestinian Land, with tens of thousands killed, nearly half a million Palestinians needing humanitarian aid and hundreds of thousands jobless in the West Bank. It goes without saying that the situation in the Gaza Strip is indescribable and constitutes a shame for whatever remains of human civilization.

We welcome the report's references to international legal obligations of Israel in occupied Palestinian land and we agree with the imperative need to stop the attacks, violence, and bloodshed and to immediately address the life-threatening conditions faced by the Palestinians. However, we note the absence of any effective measure against Israel, while in other cases there are excessive relevant reports and decisions, something that, once again, underlines the political criteria and selective sensibilities within the ILO.

Nevertheless, it is clear that there can be no justice, no dignified life, and no work for the Palestinians as long as the Israeli occupation continues. We reiterate that the crucial precondition to secure and consolidate peace in the wider Middle East, is to immediately end the Israeli occupation and settlements in the occupied Arab territories, the guarantee of the right of return for the refugees and the establishments of the independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Thank you very much.

Intervention of the WFTU General Secretary at the 112th ILC

The WFTU's General Secretary, Pambis Kyritsis, delivered his intervention at the plenary session of the 112th ILC, analyzing the global situation and reiterating the positions of the WFTU to defend workers' rights all over the world.

Beginning his speech, he expressed the WFTU's solidarity towards the Palestinian people facing genocide "As we are giving our speeches, the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza by the murderous Israeli state continues unabated, with the support or tolerance of the USA, the EU, and their allies. This heinous crime is shamefully being portrayed as Israel's right to self-defense. We demand immediate ceasefire, justice, and freedom for Palestine..."

WFTU's General Secretary emphasized the struggles of the working class all over the world against the attacks of capital and its representatives "Workers and pensioners do not passively accept this reality. They resist neoliberal capitalist, anti-worker attacks. They demand the satisfaction of their contemporary needs. They realize that only through struggle can their lives change..."

He highlighted and condemned the monopolization of workers representation within the ILO "Of course, this monopolization of the workers' representation is not maintained by chance..... It suits them to maintain the practice of double standards..."

You can read the full intervention of General Secretary below:

Speech of Pambis Kyritsis / General Secretary of the WFTU

Plenary Session 112th ILC, 2024

Ladies and gentlemen,

Dear colleagues,

As we are giving our speeches, the genocide of the Palestinians in Gaza by the murderous Israeli state continues unabated, with the support or tolerance of the USA, the EU, and their allies.

We demand immediate ceasefire, justice, and freedom for Palestine, through the creation of an independent Palestinian state on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital.

The struggle for peace for us has specific content: it opposes imperialistic wars and supports the right of every people to choose their own path without interventions, sanctions, blockades, and economic wars.

We are living in a period where the crisis of capitalism is generalized and deepening. Social inequalities, exploitation, and poverty are dramatically widening.

The high cost of living is brutally undermining the living standards of workers and pensioners. Individual contracts, privatizations, outsourcing, teleworking, and "service leasing" are just some of the methods being used to deregulate labor and intensify exploitation. The right to organize and engage in collective bargaining, as well as the sacred right to strike, is under attack.

Workers and pensioners do not passively accept this reality. They resist neoliberal capitalist, anti-worker attacks. They demand the satisfaction of their contemporary needs. They realize that only through struggle can their lives change.

Unfortunately, the harsh daily reality of workers is far from the pleasant slogans that abound in ILO declarations.

This year, a new grandiose terminology has been introduced in the General Director's report: another slogan in luxurious packaging – the “new social contract.” But what the workers need are measures. Rights. Protect of the trade union freedoms and ensure permanent and stable employment regulated by collective agreements to meet their contemporary needs.

Colleagues, Ladies and gentlemen,

This year, as we all know, is an election year for the ILO but are these elections truly democratic? Do they ensure even minimal representativeness and pluralism? NO. Absolutely NO.

It is clear that the representation of workers is systematically monopolized, and the opinions of hundreds of millions of workers represented by the WFTU and other international organizations are marginalized and ignored.

Of course, this monopolization of the workers' representation is not maintained by chance. It suits the ruling circles. It is convenient for them to have workers represented by unions that have long abandoned class struggle and do not challenge their omnipotence. It suits them also to maintain the practice of double standards, targeting countries like Cuba, Belarus, Syria, and many others for not aligning with their geopolitical plans, while they coddle Israel and obscure their own anti-worker practices.

The WFTU will not stop fighting and demanding a genuinely representative and pluralistic ILO, with democratic and participatory functioning, as dictated by its role and the reasons for its creation.

Ladies and gentlemen, Dear colleagues,

The weapon of the workers all over the world, is solidarity and internationalism. The WFTU will continue to fight for a world without wars and imperialistic interventions, without exploitation and discrimination. Where work will be permanent and stable, regulated and safe.

Thank you.

Presentation of the George Mavrikos' book “Critical Notes on the History of the World Trade Union Movement”

The presentation of the book of WFTU Honorary President, George Mavrikos, “Critical Notes on the History of the World Trade Union Movement” took place in Geneva, Switzerland on June 12th, 2024.

The event was realized in the author's presence in the framework of the WFTU events on the occasion of the 112th International Labour Conference of the ILO. Tens of Trade Unionists participated and honored the important presentation and the WFTU General Secretary, Pambis Kyritsis delivered the Central Presentation Speech.

14th National Delegate Conference of Ceylon Bank Employees Union

The 14th National Delegate Conferenc of Ceylon Bank Employees Union will be held on 5th July 2024at the National Youth Council Auditorium Maharagama. Comrade C Sri Kumar, Deputy General Secretary WFTU and Comrade C H Venkatachalam / Chairman of the Finance Committee of WFTU will be attending the Conference on behalf of WFTU as Chief Guests.

Glimpses from the WFTU Activities / Intervention in the 112th Session of ILO









With Greetings,

Yours Comradely,

(C.SRIKUMAR)

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Copy to :

The General Secretary,

WFTU

..... for information please.