The Freedom of Association procedure

In 1996, the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) filed a complaint against the Government of Indonesia for violations of trade union rights, including the denial of the workers' right to establish organizations of their own choosing, the persistent interference by government authorities, the military and employers in trade union activities, ongoing restrictions in collective bargaining and strike action, as well as very serious allegations concerning the arrest and harassment of trade union leaders, together with the disappearance and assassination of workers and unionists. Among the numerous trade union leaders detained during this period were Dita Indah Sari, labour activist of the Democratic Peoples Party and chairwoman of the Centre for Indonesian Workers Struggle, and Muchtar Pakpahan, chairman of the Indonesian Prosperity Trade Union (SBSI). Through the CFA, the international community kept up the pressure on Indonesia for the release of trade union leaders detained because of their trade union activity. Muchtar Pakpahan was released in 1998, followed by Dita Sari one year later, whereupon she was unanimously elected Chairperson of the National Front for Indonesian Workers struggle, the FN PBI. Indonesia's engagement with the ILO marked a turning point for labour rights in the country. In the years since then Indonesia has taken significant steps to improve protection of trade union rights, and has ratified all eight fundamental conventions, making it one of the few nations in the Asia-Pacific region to have done so.47 The case of Dita Sari is not unique. In the last decade alone, more than 2,000 trade unionists worldwide were released from prison after this ILO committee examined their cases.

The Committee on Freedom of Association in action

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