



## ILO Officials: Labour Day Affects YOU!

The origins of May Day 1886 may seem far off to us today – almost like ancient history. On this day in Chicago, tens of thousands of working people marched in the streets calling for the 8-hour day. The peaceful demonstration was a success, and went off without incident. In the days that followed, hundreds of thousands of workers across the United States went out on strike, but in Chicago, the forces of law and order became the forces of repression. In front of the McCormick Harvester Works factory, striking workers had gathered to protest the recruitment of strike-breakers by factory management. The police charged the demonstration, with their guns drawn. Six men were killed.

The following day, a demonstration was organized in Haymarket Square to protest the police violence. Though the rally was peaceful, the police officers marched on the demonstrators to force them to disperse. Suddenly, a bomb exploded, and a police officer was killed immediately. The police began firing into the crowd, and a riot erupted. 60 police officers and over 200 civilians were injured in the ensuing violence. In all, seven police officers were killed. It is not known how many civilians died in the fighting.

The identity of the individual who threw the bomb has never been determined, but eight union leaders were tried for murder and, with one exception, were sentenced to death. Four of them were executed.

It is in memory of the Martyrs of Chicago, and all those who fell for the cause of freedom of association, that May 1st is an international day of action.

**For officials of the International Labour Office, this day cannot be ignored. More than 120 years after the Haymarket massacre, there remains a great deal to be done before we can say that we have achieved Decent Work, social justice and respect for International Labour Standards.**

At this very moment, the Committee on Freedom of Association has before it 132 complaints related to freedom of association.

According to the new International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), 115 trade unionists were assassinated in 2005. During this same period, more than 1,600 union activists were victims of violence, and 9,000 others were arrested. Added to this are nearly 10,000 working men and women who were fired due to their union activities.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of April, 2007, 11 Turkish trade unionists were sentenced to more than one year in prison for participating in a demonstration. One day earlier, ITUC presented the ILO with a report which indicated collusion between the Colombian security services and the death squads that operate throughout the country. Among the evidence presented was a list of 22 names – all trade unionists targeted for assassination. Seven had already been slain. The Iranian authorities have recently arrested dozens of trade unionists, doubtless in an effort to undermine the demonstrations planned for May 1<sup>st</sup>. On April 12<sup>th</sup>, our Office published a declaration in which it expressed its deep concern regarding the decision of the Cambodian Court of Appeal to uphold the judgments against two people imprisoned since January 2004 for the murder of trade union leader Chea Vichea on the basis of confessions that were extracted through torture.

**As ILO Officials, Labour Day is of direct concern to us. This is why the Staff Union Committee invites you to participate in the Labour Day march organized by local and international trade union organizations in Geneva.**

**Meeting Point:**

- **14.30: Place des 22 Cantons, in front of the Brasserie Bagatelle (close to Gare Cornavin).**
- **15.00: The march leaves from boulevard James-Fazy, and follows Place des XXII cantons, rue de Chantepoulet, rue et pont du Mont-Blanc, Place du Port, Place Longemalle, rues Basses, rue de la Corraterie, Place Neuve, and ending at the parc des Bastions (see [map](#)).**