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International Transport Workers' Federation
Federación Internacional de los Trabajadores del Transporte
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Internationella transportarbetarefederationen
Internationale Transportarbeiter-Föderation
Международная федерация транспортников
الاتحاد الدولي لعمال النقل

Turkish Airlines Inc
Bilal Eksi
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34149 Bakirkoy/Istanbul
Turkiye

By email: bilaleksi@thy.com; beksi@thy.com

Our ref: CA/GMR/dn

22 April 2020

Dear Mr Eksi,

Problems concerning the coverage of the implementation of short-term employment allowance

I am writing on behalf of the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), which represents more than 18.5 million transport workers all around the world, including Turkey.

We have been informed by our affiliate the Turkish Civil Aviation Union (Hava-Is) about their deep concerns regarding the implementation of the unpaid leave program that was recently initiated by your airline as well as the coverage of the short-term employment allowance that was furnished by the Turkish government.

We understand that before Turkish Airlines made its short-term employment allowance application on 1 April 2020, around 2,500 workers had voluntarily opted for the unpaid leave program. Like their sisters and brothers around the world, our colleagues at Hava-Is see this program as an acceptable short term/crisis measure. However, Hava-Is maintains that since the application for the short-term work allowance scheme, Turkish Airlines management has been dragging its feet in ending the implementation of the previous unpaid leave program supported by the goodwill of these workers.

Moreover, as you know, the Turkish government imposed a partial curfew for its citizens older than 60 and younger than 20, as part of measures against the COVID-19 outbreak. Hava-Is claims that taking advantage of this measure, Turkish Airlines management is now putting pressure on its workers older than 60 to apply for unpaid leave.

At the same time, Turkish Airlines Inc., has applied for the Short-Term Work Allowance and staff who have not benefited, should also benefit from this right in accordance with the legislation of the Turkish General Directorate of ISKUR. The Short-Term Working Allowance and unemployment funds have been introduced by the Republic of Turkey in order to enable employers overcome the economic crisis created by the pandemic, so these measures should be used in this instance. It should not be forgotten that this right,

which is offered by the government, is actually a fund accumulated from employees' salaries at the time they work. After the pandemic, the most trained human resources will be needed, especially in the aviation sector. Aviation workers, who also provide air cargo services, have all their vital needs, especially medical supplies, in the war against pandemics worldwide.

In addition, it is in the correspondence of the Turkish Airlines Inc's union, HAVA-IS with the Turkish DGCA, through the use of the circulars issued by the government, against the workers, that we finally find the important opinion, given by the Turkish DGCA in response to the status of the OML and flight crews with various health restrictions. In the decision on Turkish Airlines Inc. to benefit from the Short-Term Working Allowance of the workers, we demand that the opinion received from Turkish DGCA be respected on behalf of all aviation employees.

The above mentioned alleged practices by Turkish Airlines management clearly contradict the system of international labour standards (ILS) maintained by the International Labour Organization (ILO). The ITF believes that this will be a missed opportunity for Turkish Airlines as the Labour Standards are a useful decent work compass in the context of the crisis response to the COVID 19 outbreak.

Respecting key provisions of ILS relating to safety and health, working arrangements, protection of specific categories of workers, non-discrimination, social security or employment protection is the guarantee that workers, employers and government maintain decent work while adjusting to the COVID-19 pandemic. This is crucial in terms of encouraging a human-centred approach to the crisis and to its recovery.

The ILO's Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention, 1958 (No. 111), which is ratified by Turkey, prohibits discrimination in all aspects of employment and occupation. This includes direct and indirect discrimination. Leaving 2,500 workers who opted for unpaid leave previously and 1,000 workers older than 60 outside the coverage of the short-term work allowance, would amount to indirect discrimination and constitute a violation of ILO convention No. 111. Even worse, at a time when Turkish Airlines recently started a buyback program, such unfair practices could lead to accusations of opportunism, rather than a constructive dialogue or the creation and consolidation of social partnership.

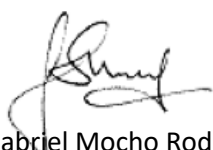
Regarding the case of your workers older than 60, I would also like to remind you that according to the ILO's Medical Care and Sickness Benefits Recommendation, 1969 (No. 134, workers who are absent from work for the purpose of quarantine and whose salary is suspended should be granted a (sickness) cash benefit.

Hava-Is and its members are ready and willing to work with Turkish Airlines management to ensure a stable future for the carrier in these extremely challenging times. However, for this to happen, Turkish Airlines management should recognise that the core asset of an airline is the skills, expertise and goodwill of its employees. These are not an asset to be traded like a commodity, and nor should their security and working conditions be undermined. There is no doubt that as employers and unions we can navigate our way through this crisis only by working side by side.

The ITF will continue to closely monitor the situation.

I look forward to your positive response on these urgent and important matters.

Yours sincerely,



Gabriel Mocho Rodriguez
Civil Aviation and Tourism Services Section Secretary