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**Die Gewerkschaft.
Le Syndicat.
Il Sindacato.**

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Turkish Embassy in Bern botschaft.bern@mfa.gov.tr

Copy to birlesikteksstilsendikasi@gmail.com

Solidarity with Mehmet Türkmen – Respect for Trade Union Rights and Worker Safety

18th March 2026

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Dear Sir or Madam,

On behalf of the Swiss Trade Union, we are writing to express our strong concern regarding the imprisonment of Mehmet Türkmen, General President of the United Textile, Weaving and Leather Workers Union (BİRTEK-SEN) in Turkey. Mr. Türkmen was detained following a speech during a workers' protest at Sirma Carpet in Gaziantep, in which he raised serious concerns about workplace safety and the lack of accountability for employers following severe accidents. This is the second time he has been detained following complaints from the same employer.

Trade union leaders must be able to defend workers' rights, raise concerns about unsafe working conditions, and advocate for accountability without facing criminal prosecution. Such activities are protected under fundamental rights, including freedom of expression and freedom of association, as enshrined in ILO Conventions No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise and No. 98 on the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining, to which Turkey is bound. The criminalization of legitimate trade union activity raises serious concerns regarding compliance with these international labour standards and sends a chilling message to workers seeking to protect their safety and dignity.

We therefore call on Sirma Carpet and the Turkish authorities to:

- Withdraw any complaints against Mr. Türkmen and refrain from criminalizing legitimate union activity and ensure his immediate release
- Respect the rights of workers to organize and speak about workplace safety without fear of repression
- Engage in dialogue with workers and their representatives to improve workplace conditions and accountability.

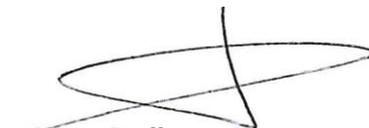
Defending workers' lives and rights is not a crime. Protecting union leaders like Mehmet Türkmen is essential for ensuring that workers in Turkey can organize freely, demand safe workplaces, and be heard without threat of imprisonment.

We stand in solidarity with Mehmet Türkmen, BİRTEK-SEN and all workers in Turkey.

Regards,



Silvia Locatelli
Member of the Executive Committee
Head of Industrial Sector



Yves Defferrard
Industrial sector delegate
to international organizations