

To Members of the External Affairs
Committee of the European
Parliament

[Letter sent by e-mail]

Re: Presentation of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding

Dear Members of the External Affairs Committee of the European Parliament,

I am contacting you to ask you to condemn the attacks against trade unions in Tunisia and to support human and trade union rights in the context of the relationship between the EU and Tunisia.

As you know, tomorrow there will be the presentation of the EU-Tunisia Memorandum of Understanding by the Director General of DG NEAR, Geert Jan KOOPMAN, in the AFET committee.

The ETUC is extremely concerned that the partnership with Tunisia does not address the grievous violations of human and workers' rights. As we have stated in a letter to the Commission President in June ([here](#)), financial support from the EU to the Tunisian government must be made conditional on the full respect for human rights, including workers and trade union rights, the respect of social partners' role and social dialogue. Workers must be supported to take actions through their trade unions. However, none of these conditions feature in the text of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Tunisia.

The EU should aspire to have an ethical foreign policy, but the MoU with Tunisia is a good example of an ethics-free foreign policy. The EU could use this partnership as an opportunity to enforce respect for human, migrants' and workers' rights in Tunisia. Instead, the EU is handing a public relations coup to an autocratic regime, turning a blind eye to its assault on trade unions and allowing it to scale-up the mistreatment of migrants using European taxpayers' money.

The EU must safeguard democratic values and establish a European path of solidarity and shared responsibility and provide safe and regular migration pathways. Member states and the EU must stop restricting the life-saving work carried out by NGOs on search and rescue as well as the illegal pushbacks, arbitrary detention and systematic violence and abuse of migrants and refugees.

Similarly, any trade partnership on renewable energy must also be based on respect of international standards as that should be the expectation for all parties. We cannot allow unscrupulous governments to use the EU's need for alternative energy sources to extract concessions on respect of international norms and human rights. If the EU allows that to happen, we undermine the international rules-based system.

We call on you to take these concerns into account and raise them with DG NEAR's Director General during tomorrow's debate.

Your sincerely,



Esther Lynch,
General Secretary of the European Trade Union Confederation