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Dear Prime Minister,

Interference in the Affairs of the Real Estate Tax Authority Union

Public Services International (PSI) has been informed by our affiliate the Real Estate Tax Authority Union about serious interference with its independence and autonomy by the President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation.

The Real Estate Tax Authority Union (RETA) was formally constituted on 21 April 2009 in accordance with the Egyptian Constitution and International Labour Organisation Conventions 87 and 98, which have been ratified by the Egyptian government. After protracted negotiations, RETA succeeded in establishing a Social Care Fund, providing retirement benefits for its members. The Minister of Finance's decision No. 425 dated July 2009 approved the establishment of the Fund.

According to our information, considerable pressure is being exerted by Mr Hussein Megawer, President of the Egyptian Trade Union Federation (ETUF) on officials, including officials in the Real Estate Tax Authority and Ministry of Finance, to withdraw the recognition of RETA as an independent trade union and to dissolve or seize control of the Social Care Fund.

This pressure has taken the following forms:

- Shortly after RETA was formally recognised, Mr Megawer attempted to form a new general trade union for employees of the Real Estate Tax Authority; an attempt which was overwhelmingly rejected by the employees.
- ETUF and the National Trade Union of Banks, Insurance and Financial Affairs have written to your government requesting it not to have any dealings with RETA.
- ETUF has filed corruption charges against the RETA leadership, accusing RETA of collecting union dues without authorisation.
- In July 2009, two RETA officials were physically assaulted in Gharibya Governate and Sharkiya Governate.
- RETA officers have been referred for investigation before administrative prosecutors and the legal departments of their workplaces. These officers include **Mr Tarek Mustafa**, the union treasurer and

chairman of the union committee in Kalubiya Governorate; **Mr Abdel Nasser Sayed Mansour**, chairman of the union committee in Beni Suef Governorate; **Mr Hussein Kilany**, chairman of the union committee in Assiut Governorate; **Mr Ezzat Khaled**, chairman of the union committee in Qena Governorate; and **Mr Khaled Mubarak**, treasurer of the union committee in Aswan Governorate.

- RETA members are often called to the State Security offices where they are intimidated.
- RETA leaders are arbitrarily transferred from their job sites to remote places.
- At the instigation of the ETUF, an amendment to decision No. 425 was signed on 5 August 2009 which replaced RETA with the General Trade Union of Banks and Insurances, an ETUF affiliate, as signatory to the Social Care Fund.
- On 10 August 2009, ETUF filed a report with the Public Prosecutor against the President of RETA, Mr Kamal Abu Eita, and against the decision of the Minister of Finance approving the establishment of RETA's Social Care Fund. The report falsely alleges that Mr Abu Eita's election as President was irregular and that RETA is therefore an illegal entity.

PSI urges your government to take swift measures to ensure that RETA can freely exercise its role as an independent trade union organisation; to condemn all acts of intimidation and harassment against the leadership and members of RETA and to condemn all external interference in RETA's activities. We further call on your government to confirm the establishment of a Social Care Fund for RETA members.

Yours sincerely



Peter Waldorff

General Secretary

Cc: H.E. Dr. Youssef Boutros-Ghali, Minister of Finance; H.E. Mrs. Aesha Abdel Hadi Abdel Ghani, Minister of Manpower and Immigration; PSI Arab countries and PSI Africa; Real Estate Tax Authority Union; Centre for Trade Union & Workers Services; Mr Kacem Afiya; ITUC Geneva and Brussels.

Public Services International (PSI) is a global trade union federation that represents 20 million women and men working in the public services around the world. It has some 600 affiliated unions in more than 150 countries. PSI is an autonomous body, which works in association with federations covering other sectors of the workforce and with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC). PSI is an officially recognised non-governmental organisation for the public sector within the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and has consultative status with ECOSOC and observer status with other UN bodies such as UNCTAD and UNESCO.