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PM's union-bashing bill breaks international law: International think tank

The Morrison Government's latest legislative attack on the rights of working people breaches two international conventions to which Australia is a signatory, research from the UK-based International Centre for Trade Union Rights has found.

The researchers found that the proposed Ensuring Integrity bill, which would allow the Minister, the government regulator and any person "with sufficient interest" – which could include employer groups – to seek to have union officers disqualified or entire unions deregistered were "incompatible with Australia's commitments under the ILO's Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No.87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No.98)."

Describing the bill as "harmful to workers, undermining to trade union democracy, and of no tangible benefit to the promotion of harmonious industrial relations," the researchers said no equivalent for the extreme measures could be found in any industrial democracy, noting that "None of the industrialised democracies we surveyed entertain anything approximating such a punitive regime."

The bill is even more oppressive than Turkey's laws that target working people's representatives, is most analogous to authoritarian regimes. The nearest equivalent law identified is a 1943 act brought in under the Vargas dictatorship in Brazil.

The ACTU has repeatedly slammed the proposed laws as extreme, anti-democratic and ideologically motivated.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President Michele O'Neil:

"This international research shows that the Morrison Government is willing to break international law to pursue his extreme and dangerous agenda.

"Scott Morrison is willing to throw away more than 100 years of international cooperation so he can target the nurses, postal workers, public servants and teachers who hold voluntary officer positions in the body that represents them.

"Australia already has one of the most restrictive set of regulations on workers' organisations among democratic nations. This extreme new law would align Australia with authoritarian, undemocratic countries."

"This bill will harm ordinary working people and lead to increases in wage theft and unsafe work."

"The only people who would benefit from these laws are the Morrison Government and unethical employers."

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