

INTERNATIONAL CONFEDERATION OF FREE TRADE UNIONS

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Withdraw "deceptive" legislation, world trade union body urges Fiji

Brussels, Friday, 24 June (ICFTU online): The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions today wrote to the Prime Minister of Fiji, the Honourable Laisenia Qarase, expressing its strong concern at the Government's decision to unilaterally impose the "Promotion of Reconciliation, Tolerance and Unity Bill 2005" (PRTU) despite widespread opposition from the people of Fiji, including the ICFTU-affiliated Fiji Trades Union Congress (FTUC).

"The Bill does not promote reconciliation but rather promotes the illegal overthrow of elected governments for political expediency. Your Government's intent in introducing the Bill is questionable," ICFTU General-Secretary Guy Ryder wrote in the letter, which followed a decision earlier this week by the organisation's Executive Board to urge the Government to withdraw the bill in the interests of the people of Fiji.

The ICFTU is particularly alarmed that the bill seeks to give the perpetrators of the 2000 coup d'état absolute amnesty, including from civil liability for their criminal acts, legalises acts of treason and terrorism and undermines the judiciary and the rule of law.

The ICFTU Executive Board also noted that there had been absolutely no consultation with the people of Fiji, including the opposition political parties, nor was there sufficient notice given to Parliament on the introduction of the Bill.

"A healthy public discussion and debate prior to the drafting of the Bill would no doubt have set a solid foundation for reconciliation and unity amongst the people of Fiji. As evident already, the Bill is the most divisive piece of legislation ever introduced by your Government and there can be no argument about this. Ironically it is called the 'reconciliation and unity' bill. We are convinced that this bill will set a dangerous precedent and will encourage future violations of the rule of law, human rights and democracy," Ryder concluded in the letter.

The international trade union movement has taken a keen interest in human and trade union rights matters in Fiji for many decades now, ever since the coups d'état of 1987, when the ICFTU campaigned with its affiliate, the FTUC to ensure that human rights, democracy and rule of law prevailed in the country.

For the full ICFTU letter to the Fiji Government, see:

<http://www.icftu.org/displaydocument.asp?Index=991221952&Language=EN>

The ICFTU represents 145 million workers in 233 affiliated organizations in 154 countries and territories.

ICFTU is also a partner in Global Unions: <http://www.global-unions.org>

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