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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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China: Increasingly repressive measures used against workers in Panyu

Brussels, 13 March 2008 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has today protested again to the Municipal Government of Guangzhou, in China's Guangdong Province, against a wave of repressive action taken by the local Panyu authorities in regard to recent collective actions by workers in Panyu district.

In its second protest within one week addressed to Guangzhou Mayor Zhang Guangning, the ITUC condemned the police dispersal of a peaceful protest of around 4,000 workers from the Japanese-invested Casio Electronics Factory. The police action took place when some 3,000 to 4,000 Casio workers protested outside their factory on the morning of 6 March 2008. Mainland sources indicate the workers were dispersed by around 1,000 armed riot-police and other public security officials. Some 20 workers, including women workers, were reportedly injured during the clashes.

The Casio labour dispute began on 5 March when the company informed workers that the basic wages would be raised from 580 Yuan to 690 Yuan in accordance with new regulations. However, workers then discovered that the company simultaneously cut their monthly bonus from between 85 and 200 yuan down to between 5 and 60 Yuan.

Several workers were taken away by police and are believed by other workers to remain in detention. Photographs of the incident show at least two women workers being escorted away by police.

The ITUC also followed up on the sentencing of some thirteen workers, all involved in recent Panyu labour protests. The ITUC has now discovered that five of the thirteen workers recently detained in Panyu, those from a shoe factory in Panyu-now believed to be the Guangzhou Li Chang Footwear Company Limited-have been charged with offences under criminal law relating to unauthorized demonstration and disturbing public order. They may face criminal trials and prison sentences of up to seven years, See 6 March online: <http://www.ituc-csi.org/spip.php?article1877>

In its second letter to the authorities

http://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/Panya_.pdf, the ITUC urged the Guangdong Provincial government to investigate the current wave of repressive methods taken by the Panyu authorities in regard to the growing worker unrest in the area. According to ITUC sources, Panyu is a relatively rural part of Guangdong province which has seen growing worker unrest-over the past two weeks, several workers' disputes have taken place-and the authorities are well known for their strong-handed tactics in dealing with worker protests.

The ITUC also urged the immediate release of any workers detained during the peaceful protest on 6 March. It further urged the Guangzhou government to put an end to the criminalization of workers involved in the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. Noting that the original thirteen workers have been arrested and detained solely for the peaceful exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association, the ITUC says it may consider lodging a formal complaint against China at the ILO's Committee on Freedom of Association if the

workers are not released.

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 155 countries and territories and has 311 national affiliates.

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