

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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ITUC Deeply Disturbed by Decision of Thai Labour Court

Brussels, 29 July 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) denounces the decision of the Thai Labour Court which upheld management's right to dismiss seven officers of the State Railway Workers' Union of Thailand (SRUT) for their part in a safety-related industrial action two years ago. The court further allowed a fine of 15 million Thai Bhat (~353,000 €).

Because of the utter lack of safety measures in the railway system, which included maintaining a fleet of trains that were mechanically unsound and the practice of pushing train operators to work for weeks on end with little to no rest, there were two train derailments and one fatal accident (which killed seven and injured many others) within just a few days of each other in October 2009. Management refused to work with the union to address these problems, which left workers no other option but to initiate an industrial action on October 16 to demand better, safer conditions for workers and the public. In response, management of the State Railways of Thailand (SRT) sued the union lost earnings and fired the union leaders who initiated the action, evidence not only of management's complete disregard for health and safety but a deep-seated anti-union animus. Sadly, accidents continue in the rail system due to management's disregard of their obligations to keep the system safe.

"Trade unionists should not have to pay for the poor decisions of management," said ITUC General Secretary Sharan Burrow. "We are deeply troubled by the court's decision and fully support the trade union's appeal." The ITUC urges SRT not to fire these leaders before or pending the appeal.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 151 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org> and <http://www.youtube.com/ITUCCSI>

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