

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

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Fiji: all-out assault on trade unionism by the military government

Brussels, 5 August 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The military government of Fiji has engaged in an all-out assault on trade unionism this year, by force and by decree, and it is getting worse by the day. Just this week, union officials were detained, questioned and charged with "unlawful assembly" by police simply for meeting with union members to prepare for collective bargaining negotiations. "This is completely unacceptable. Any and all charges must be dropped", said Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary. Earlier this year, several trade union leaders were brutally beaten by members of the armed forces for exercising their fundamental trade union rights.

A series of laws and executive decrees have chiselled away at fundamental worker rights and in some cases have even eliminated the possibility to challenge the unilateral acts of the government, which undermine workers' industrial and democratic rights, before any tribunal. With the issuance this week of the Essential National Industries Employment Decree, the rights of Fijian workers were dealt yet another severe blow. The decree, among other things, requires existing unions to re-register under burdensome new rules, voids existing collective bargaining agreements and all but eliminates the right to strike -- in any industry that the government may designate. "This decree constitutes a near total repudiation of the fundamental trade union rights of the International Labour Organization," explained Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

"There is no question as to the government's aim - to destroy independent trade unionism in Fiji. We will not stand back and allow that to happen," stated General Secretary Burrow. "Its actions leave us with no other option than to escalate further our campaign to mobilize the international community to condemn these acts and to advocate for the restoration of trade union and democratic freedoms in Fiji."

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

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