

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
ITUC OnLine

Fiji Union Leader Arrested After Commonwealth Meeting

Brussels, 31 October 2011 (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC strongly condemns the arrest and detention, without charge, of Daniel Urai, President of the Fiji Trade Union Council. Mr. Urai was arrested at the airport upon his return from the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Perth, Australia, where he spoke out against human and trade union rights abuses perpetrated by the Fijian government. Both Mr. Urai and Dinesh Goundar, a labour organizer, also must appear at hearing on October 31 on charges stemming from a previous arrest.

The two were charged under state security law simply for having held a union meeting to prepare members for collective bargaining. Since their initial arrest, other union meetings have been broken up by police, and even social meetings of trade unionists have led to hours-long interrogations by police.

The ITUC is also concerned that trade unions will shortly be forced to re-register under onerous new rules and collective bargaining agreements will be abrogated under the recently passed Essential Industries Decree. These measures strike a severe blow to workers' rights in many economic sectors in Fiji and violate international labour law. There is little doubt that the re-registration process will be used to attempt to depose current trade union leaders and weaken the capacity of unions to represent their members.

The ITUC deplores the ongoing harassment of trade unionists Fiji and calls upon the authorities to release Mr. Urai immediately and to drop all charges against him and Mr. Goundar. The international community must press the regime to come into compliance with fundamental human and trade union rights and, if it does not, implement political and economic measures to bring about much-needed reforms.

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 308 affiliated national organisations from 153 countries and territories.

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