

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

Fiji: Sugar Mills workers are still under pressure by the regime

Brussels, 27 July 2013 (ITUC OnLine): The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) strongly condemns the latest round of threats and intimidation by Fiji's military regime. Sugar mill workers have been under pressure by the regime ever since they decided to vote on a possible strike. The state-owned Fiji Sugar Corporation (FSC) continues to refuse to negotiate with workers over wages and working conditions – the last wage increase being over 7 years ago. Despite FSC management threats, and the presence of police and military during the strike vote, workers voted overwhelmingly to authorize a strike.

Even with the intervention by the International Labour Organization, urging respect for the workers' right to freedom of association, the regime has only ratcheted up the pressure. Management is now warning workers that they would not be allowed to return to work if they go on strike and that they would be dealt with by the military. To back up these threats, two truckloads of military officers drove into Lautoka mill on August 21 to "inspect" the mill. The Attorney General himself has also warned the union that he would break the strike by bringing in replacement workers to keep the mills running.

"The international community must reject these latest violations by the Fiji regime. In particular, we call on the companies and NGOs involved in the Fiji sugar industry to publicly denounce this situation and use their leverage to bring the regime to the negotiating table," said Sharan Burrow, General Secretary of the ITUC. "Continued collaboration with this industry is becoming less and less tenable by the day."

The ITUC represents 175 million workers in 156 countries and territories and has 315 national affiliates.

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