
IMF NEWS

MORE THAN 50,000 RALLY FOR GLOBAL DAYS OF ACTION ON MEXICO

Mexican and foreign political leaders and Ambassadors took notice as unions from every part of the globe turned out at Mexican Embassies, national parliaments and congressional halls to voice their concern about the Mexican government's increasingly violent attitude towards independent trade unions.

GLOBAL/MEXICO: Union members, students and human rights activists from some 40 countries participated in the Global Days of Action, launched on February 14 in Mexico City and Australia simultaneously. For six days, unions from around the globe came together holding actions, writing letters and taking meetings with political figures to highlight massive labour rights violations in Mexico. From Mumbai to Milan, Hong Kong to Helsinki, the message to the Mexican government was the same:

- Hold employer and government officials accountable for the Pasta de Conchos mine explosion that killed 65 miners on February 19, 2006.
- Abolish systemic violations of workers' freedom of association, including employer-dominated "protection contracts" and interference in union elections.
- End the use of force-by the state or private parties-to repress workers' legitimate demands for democratic unions, better wages and working conditions, and good health and safety conditions.
- End the campaign of political persecution against the Mexican Miners' Union and the Mexican

Electrical Workers' Union. The largest actions took place in Mexico City, with more than 50,000 union members participating in marches, rallies, embassy visits and demonstrations throughout the entire week. Outside of Mexico, the week's heavyweights were Australia (500 people at the Global Days of Action launch) and South Africa (300 people outside the Mexican Embassy in Johannesburg). Other sizeable demonstrations took place in New Delhi, Canberra, San Francisco, Vancouver, Milan, Jakarta, Chicago, and Washington DC.

The fallen were remembered and honoured in Mexico, Belgium, USA and South Africa. In Tucson, Arizona, individuals in front of the Mexican Consulate wore placards with the names of the 65 miners killed in the Pasta de Conchos mine. In Johannesburg, NUMSA members carried 65 coffins with a miners' name on each to the Mexican Embassy.

At most meetings union delegations met with Ambassadors or political staff and were able to have lengthy discussions on the issues, however in some cases, activists were forced to hold meetings on the sidewalk, (Seoul and New York City) or deliver their message by police escort (Johannesburg). In total, more than 50 meetings with Embassy representatives or policymakers took place last week, shining a light on Mexico's refusal to honour its international commitments to respect Freedom of Association. These meetings are key as the Committee on Freedom of Association will meet next week at the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to discuss two significant complaints filed against Mexico, one regarding union autonomy and the other regarding "protection contracts".

An electronic campaign was launched at the same time on Labourstart. So far, more than 3450 electronic letters have been sent to the Mexican government, most coming from Canada, USA, UK, Mexico and Australia. The electronic campaign will continue for the next two months. You can join the effort here. On Facebook, almost 3,000 people have joined the cause in support of the Global Days of Action. See: <http://www.causes.com/causes/576498>.

The Global Days of Action was organised by four Global Union Federations, the International Metalworkers' Federation (IMF), International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF), International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM), and UNI Global Union, and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC).

For more information see: <http://www.imfmetal.org/mexico2011> [February 24, 2011]

MEXICAN MINERS AND ELECTRICIANS UNITE!

Los Mineros (SNTMMSRM) and the Mexican Electrical Workers (SME) announce historic alliance to strengthen and expand democratic labour movement in Mexico.

MEXICO: In a joint press conference in Mexico City on February 23, Napoleon Gomez Urrutia of the National Union of Mineworkers (SNTMMSRM) and Martin Esparza Flores of the Mexican Electrical Workers (SME) announced an historic agreement to join efforts to fight the Mexican government's attack on independent unions and to work with other independent unions to strengthen the democratic union movement in Mexico. The agreement was signed by both leaders on February 17 in Vancouver, Canada during the Days of Global Action of Mexico.

"The Great National Unity Pact of Mining and Electrical" comes at a time when both unions are facing unprecedented repression by the Mexican government. Labour leaders from both unions remain imprisoned for their union activity, the government has illegally froze union accounts of both the SNTMMSRM and SME, and both unions have struggled against government interference in union affairs, the source of two separate complaints now pending at the International Labour Organisation.

As part of the alliance the unions pledge to develop organizational structures to coordinate their combined efforts in order to carry out common strategies and goals. They also pledge to organize meetings at the regional and national level to disseminate and consolidate the objectives of the agreement.

"This is a momentous event and a significant step in building a strong democratic and independent trade union movement in Mexico," said International Metalworkers' Federation Assistant General Secretary Fernando Lopes. "We have seen over the last week what can be accomplished when strong, democratic unions come together and demand change. The international labour community applauds this step forward and is committed to supporting the SNTMMSRM and SME as they double their efforts to fight for fundamental labour rights for Mexican workers."

See full text of the SNTMMSRM and SME pact here in Spanish only. [February 24, 2011]

CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS TO GLOBAL UNION LABOUR FILM SHORTS 2011

The International Metalworkers' Federation calls on its affiliates for submissions to the Global Union Labour Film Shorts 2011, a one hour line-up of the best short films from around the world focused on unions fighting back against austerity cuts. The line-up will be released in June online and in DVD. Submission deadline is 1 April 2011.

GLOBAL: Over the last four years the Geneva Labour Film Shorts Festival has taken place in the centre of Geneva enabling unions and working people worldwide to share their stories. This year in order to reach a wider international audience, the festival is refocusing to an on-line and DVD presentation that will be submitted to over 36 labour related film festivals around the world.

The one-hour DVD will focus on short films that are excellent examples of communicating labour stories and messages and the selection will include a range of different films from different parts of the world. The launch of the one-hour line-up will take place at the European Metalworkers' Federation "Unions in Motion" film festival, coming up on June 10 to 11, at Landschaftspark Nord in Duisburg, Germany .

Submission of films on all labour issues are encouraged, however this year the line-up will feature films that focus on unions fighting back against austerity cuts.

To reach new audiences and promote the development of trade union films, the IMF in collaboration with the International Trade Union Confederation and all the Global Union Federations will together produce the Global Unions Labour Films Shorts 2011. All IMF

affiliates are invited to submit copies of short films that they have produced or been involved in producing for possible inclusion in the programme.

Please send us copies of your films on DVD with a short paragraph describing the film, why it was produced and how it was used. The IMF will need unfettered rights to show the film and publish it online, of course with full acknowledgement of who created the material. Due to resource constraints for interpretation, the IMF is only able to accept films in English language or with English subtitles.

We need to receive copies of all possible films by 1 April 2010.

Please send to:
Cherisse Fredricks
International Metalworkers' Federation
Case Postale 1516
CH1227 Geneva
Switzerland [February 24, 2011]

TWO HUNDRED THOUSAND WORKERS MARCH TO PARLIAMENT IN INDIA

In a historic March to Parliament on February 23, 2011 around 200,000 working people of India rallied in New Delhi demanding control on price rise, strict enforcement of labour laws, linkages of employment protection with the stimulus package, universalisation of social security, enhanced social security fund and to stop privatisation of central public sector enterprises.

INDIA: The working people of India represented by all the major Central Trade Unions (CTUs) and National Employees' Federations have assembled in the national capital on February 23, 2011 to urge the Indian Parliament to ensure urgent corrective policy measures by the Government of India to mitigate the immense sufferings of the workers and the people owing to continuing rise in prices of the essential commodities, rampant violation of labour laws and attack on labour rights, rising unemployment, reckless contractorisation, casualisation and outsourcing.

The CTUs demanded concrete action for universalisation of social security benefits for entire unorganised workers without any restrictions on entitlement and allocation of adequate funds for the "National Social Security Fund". CTUs also urged the government to stop disinvestment of shares in public sector units.

In the memorandum to the Hon'ble Speaker, Lok Sabha, Parliament of India CTUs stated the Government of India is ignoring overwhelming protests of the working people and on the contrary relentlessly pursuing policies that accentuate price rise namely deregulation of petroleum prices, continuing indulgence and patronization to speculative trade in commodity market and allowing a huge stock pile of food grains in the Food Corporation of India (FCI) to rot.

CTUs termed the Government of India's argument, that 'increase in the earnings of the people is responsible for price rise' is a cruel joke and stated that owing to rising prices along with increasing job losses and unemployment and reduced earnings through mass-scale contracting and casualisation of the employment, masses of the people are facing a sharp decline in per-capita availability of food grains and other basic commodities. CTUs also condemned flawed government policies that created such a distortion in the economy that despite increase in GDP growth rate, workers' share in value added in manufacturing has been consistently declining.

CTUs and Employees' Federations solicited Hon'ble Speaker's urgent intervention to address following demands, so that the Government is prevailed upon to take expeditious remedial measures:

- Price rise of essential commodities to be contained through appropriate corrective distributive measures like universal Public Distribution System (PDS) and containing speculation in commodity market.
- Strict enforcement of all basic labour laws or stringent punitive measures for violation of labour laws.
- Concrete proactive measures to be taken for linkage of employment protection in the recession stricken sectors with the stimulus package to the industrialists and creation of jobs by augmenting public investment in infrastructure.
- Steps to be taken for removal of all restrictive provisions based on "poverty line" in respect of eligibility coverage of the

schemes under the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act 2008 and creation of national Fund for the Unorganised Sector to provide for a National Floor Level Social Security to all unorganised workers including the contract / casual workers. • Stop disinvestment of shares of Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs). All these demands were unanimously formulated by all the CTUs and Employees' Federations during the All India Convention of Workers held on September 14 2009. These demands were pressed on many occasions through "All India Protest Day" on October 28, 2009; massive dharna before parliament as well as state capitals and industrial centres on December 16, 2009; countrywide Satyagraha / Jail Bharo on March 5, 2010 in which one million workers courted arrest throughout the country and massive General Strike on September 7, 2010 by around 100 million workers.

Workers from major central trade unions INTUC, AITUC, HMS, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC, ACCTU and UTUC along with Independent Workers' and Employees' Federations participated in the March to Parliament. [February 24, 2011]

GAMMON GOLD DISPUTE IN MEXICO RESOLVED

Mexican Miners' Union achieves new two year collective agreement with Gammon Gold, ending a eight month long strike at the El Cubo mine.

MEXICO: The Mexican Miners' Union (SNTMMSRM) reached a new two year collective agreement with Gammon Gold, ending an eight month long strike at the company's mine in El Cubo, Guanajuato, Mexico, it was announced on February 23, 2011.

The agreement includes a provision to ensure that the workers will receive payment of wages for the duration of the strike.

In an earlier press statement from the Mexican Miners' Union, the union highlighted how this agreement is an example of the potential for positive relations between the union and companies, despite interference from government agencies in Mexico.

The union noted that the workers belonging to Section 142 of the Mexican Miners' Union in El Cubo stood firm in the face of difficult circumstances through out the strike and through their actions and international solidarity this agreement was reached.

In closing the union's statement added, "The commitment, now, is to resume work and to restore the productive capacity at the mine, such that legitimate gains go to the company and from this benefits are directed towards the workers, the community of El Cubo and national industry." [February 23, 2011]

FUNDAMENTAL RIGHTS UNDER ATTACK IN WISCONSIN, USA

Opposition to the anti-union onslaught against public sector workers in Wisconsin, USA goes global, as unions from around the world protest Governor Scott Walker's plan to deny democracy and fundamental rights.

USA: The International Metal Workers' Federation (IMF) and the International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions (ICEM) joined the international outcry against Wisconsin Governor Scott Walker's major assault on the rights of public sector workers to union representation and collective bargaining, with heavy pay cuts and new obstacles to freedom of association.

Governor Scott Walker plans to immediately eliminate collective bargaining rights for academic faculty, hospital workers, child care and home care workers and effectively eliminate these rights for all other public sector workers except police and fire.

Walker wants to remove all collective bargaining rights, except for salary, for all of the roughly 175,000 public employees starting July 1, 2011. Local police, fire and the state patrol would be exempt. Any requests for a salary increase higher than the consumer price index would have to be approved by referendum.

Contracts would be limited to one year and wages would be frozen until the next contract is settled. Public employers would be prohibited from collecting union dues and members of collective bargaining units would not be required to pay dues. The bill also would remove the right for University of Wisconsin faculty and staff to form unions.

The IMF and ICEM wrote to the Governor on February 21, demanding he reconsider his plans to damage social infrastructure and deny fundamental rights.

"The elimination of collective bargaining for public workers is a serious affront to dedicated staff, employees who keep the peace, teach Wisconsin's young, and provide necessary services to all. We urge you to look at constructive labour-management partnerships in Wisconsin public service, and then ask what gain there is in destroying such public models?" write IMF General Secretary Jyrki Raina and ICEM General Secretary Manfred Warda.

The statement joins with other urgent action requests, including from Public Services International and the International Confederation of Trade Unions.

"The USA was built on the foundations of freedom and democracy, but will certainly lose its claim to be the Land of the Free with this kind of extremist agenda. The entire international trade union movement stands in solidarity with these American workers whose rights are under such heavy attack, and we will do everything we can to support them," said ITUC General Secretary Sharon Burrow. [February 22, 2011]

NEW AGREEMENT REDUCES WORKING TIME AT TENARIS IN BRAZIL

A new agreement reached with Tenaris in Brazil sees a reduction of working time with no loss of wages, however at the Calgary plant in the U.S. the company has been uncooperative and is imposing lay-offs and mandatory shutdowns.

BRAZIL/USA: In a massive CNM-CUT union meeting the workers of Confab/Tenaris in Brazil in February approved the reduction of weekly hours worked without a reduction on wages. When the ministry registers the agreement at the plant the weekly hours will be 42 instead of 44. In addition the negotiations resulted in an increase of 1.4 per cent in wages, the payment of seven holidays, plus December 24 and 31. The employer recovered the "half hour process" during the bargaining process.

Meanwhile in the U.S., Tenaris management has decided to lay-off 81 workers of USW local 7226 at the Calgary plant as of February 18, 2011. Tenaris will also lay off 95 per cent of workers on March 28, 2011 for one week for maintenance issues, as well as a major plant shutdown for three weeks in July 2011. Only workers from the maintenance department will be at the plant, with a small crew of workers to handle any other orders from the yard/shipping department.

Tenaris has been very uncooperative with USW in the past six months and many grievances have been filed on seniority rights violations, the rights of workers to move to their bid jobs, and many other violations of the collective agreement with Tenaris. The Executive of USW 7226 will be asking its membership to move many of these Grievances to Arbitration and have an impartial, legal judgment rendered on these issues. [February 18, 2011]

HYUNDAI ORDERED TO RECOGNIZE PRECARIOUS WORKER AS A DIRECT EMPLOYEE

After another successful ruling in the courts in South Korea, KMWU is demanding that Hyundai bring all its subcontracted workers into direct employment.

SOUTH KOREA: In another major legal victory for workers in South Korea, the Seoul High Court declared that Choe Byeong-seung, 35, was a direct employee of Hyundai while employed at its Ulsan manufacturing complex between 2003 to 2005.

In issuing the verdict on February 10, the High Court said Choe was not a subcontracted labourer as claimed by Hyundai but a dispatched labourer who "carried out his duties mixed with regular workers on either side of the conveyer belt, and Hyundai Motor made decisions regarding workload, methods, sequence, etc."

The High Court followed the ruling of the Supreme Court of July last year, which said that Hyundai Motor had to regard Choe, who had been illegally dispatched for more than two years, as a regularly employed worker.

Following the ruling, leaders of the Korean Metal Workers' Union (KMWU) and its local branch, the Hyundai Irregular Workers' Union, held a press conference in front of Hyundai's headquarters in Seoul demanding the world's fifth largest auto maker must take this ruling as a signal to bring all subcontract workers into direct employment.

Hyundai Motor, however, made it clear that it had no intention of accepting the meaning of the High Court's ruling. The company's assertion is that this ruling is limited to Choe as an individual, and therefore cannot be applied collectively to workers from other subcontractors.

Hyundai Motor stated that, with regard to yesterday's ruling on the case of Choe too, it would continue its efforts to obtain the judgment that in-house subcontracting was not related to the dispatching of workers, by appealing again to the Supreme Court and submitting a constitutional appeal regarding laws on dispatching.

KMWU members at Hyundai's Ulan plant held a 25 day sit-down strike in November and December last year, demanding the direct employment of precarious workers, in compliance with the court rulings. The chair of KMWU's local Hyundai Irregular Workers' Union, who is still wanted by police for the strike because the bargaining to drop criminal and civil charges relating to the strike and the other demands hasn't made progress, sought shelter at a temple on February 9, 2011. Meanwhile precarious workers who led the strike and have had their bank accounts frozen are still unable to access their own personal funds. [February 17, 2011]

WORKERS AT GERDAU CONTINUE TO RESIST PLANT CLOSURES

While workers at a Gerdau facility in Duitama have secured jobs after an 18 month struggle, in Cali the struggle to keep a Gerdau plant open continues.

COLOMBIA: In Cali, Colombia the first court date in which Gerdau will try to remove the supraseniority of Edward Portilla was held on February 15, 2011. Portilla is one of two labour leaders that oppose the closing of the Sidelpa plant and refused to resign or accept a generous severance payout. If Gerdau is successful, the company will be able to fire Portilla and will be one step closer to finalize the closing of the plant.

Meanwhile in Duitama, Colombia after Gerdau announced more than 18 months ago it would close the Duitama plant, it has now confirmed the plant will reopen. When the closure was first announced the workers took over the plant to keep it open. IMF affiliate Utrammicol and Gerdau agreed that workers will continue going to the plant until the issue was resolved; they would get paid wages but no work was to be performed. For more than 18 months these workers went to the plant, sat in the cafeteria and waited. The frustration and insecurity increased their stress to the point that was already affecting their health and family life. Last week Gerdau announced that the plant will be reopened. Details will be confirmed but the struggle of these workers has reached a successful end. [February 16, 2011]

IMF EVENTS

IMF GM/OPEL PLANNING GROUP MEETING

February 22, 2011 - February 23, 2011

Russelsheim, Germany

INDONESIA: BUILDING SUSTAINABLE ORGANISING (1 JOINT WORKSHOP FSPMI-LOMENIK-LEM)

March 04, 2011 - March 06, 2011

Puncak, Bongor, Indonesia

LATIN AMERICA ARCELORMITTAL NETWORK MEETING

March 22, 2011 - March 23, 2011

Rio De Janeiro, Brazil

IMF TNC NETWORK COORDINATORS' MEETING

March 24, 2011 - March 25, 2011

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

CATERPILLAR STEERING GROUP

March 30, 2011 - March 31, 2011

Chicago, USA

IMF REGIONAL COMMUNICATORS' FORUM - LATIN AMERICA

March 31, 2011 - April 01, 2011

Sao Paolo, Brazil

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