



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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Press Release

Government Anti- Union

Industrial Relations in Fiji have never been worse with Government leading the charge to weaken and dismantle the Trade Union Movement in the country. Never have we witnessed or experienced such an anti-union Government. The Fiji Trades Union Congress is determined to ensure that workers in Fiji continue to be able to exercise their rights which are enshrined in the ILO Core Conventions, UN Declaration on Human Rights, the Fiji Constitution and the Employment Relations Act. These rights must not only be written into law but workers must be able to exercise them.

We have witnessed the imposition of individual contracts on civil servants, teachers, nurses, workers in Government owned entities. These contracts are in violation of our labour laws and international Conventions which this Government has ratified and creates insecurity of employment. Workers today feel intimidated by these contracts which can be revoked by Government or their Employer with one months' notice. Assurances by the Attorney General that these contracts will be renewed is no relief to workers and is hollow and brings into question the purpose of these contracts if they are to be renewed. The Fiji Trades Union Congress is convinced that these contracts are simply to weaken the Trade Unions by excluding them from Collective Bargaining when it comes to terms and conditions of employment of workers exactly what the Essential Industries Decree was supposed to do. This is just another round-about way that this Government is attempting to deny workers their right to Collective Bargaining and Freedom of Association.

Workers are forced to sign these contracts if they wish to be employed. Government's denials that this is the case is simply untrue. Teachers, nurses and other civil servants only know too well that if they did not sign onto the contracts determined by the Government they would be victimized and terminated from employment. These individual contracts have become a condition of employment.

The FTUC would like to point out that the law places the choice between a collective agreement and an individual contract on the worker and not on the employer as is the case today. Part 16 of the Employment Relations Act requires the Employer to negotiate a Collective Agreement in good faith. Section 20(4) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution gives Trade Unions the Right to Bargain Collectively. Section 20 also assures workers the right to fair working conditions and humane treatment. Government has also given assurances on achieving "Decent Work" for all workers. This must not be a mere slogan but a reality which calls for respect for Core ILO Conventions and a National Minimum Living Wage. This Government has also put its signature to the UN Social Development Goals (SDGs). Goal number 8 which is about achieving decent work. This is clearly not what this Government is doing and in fact moving in the opposite direction.

There is no point in painting the country with slogans on truth, honesty and Godliness when the Government is out to simply deceive and hoodwink its people. It is time for Government to demonstrate honesty and respect the fundamental rights of all workers and their families.

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National Secretary

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