



FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

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Press Release

Violation of human rights continue

The Fiji Trades Union Congress has on the last two occasions applied for a permit to march in Suva to bring to Government's attention the pressing issues that face workers of Fiji. On both those occasions, the permits were rejected for no apparent reason. This is clearly a violation of our Human and Trade Union rights. The Fiji Constitution imposed by this Government at Section 18 gives the people of Fiji the right to assemble and protest peacefully. Yet the workers have been denied this right without any reasons given by Government.

In the last instance, Suva City Council had denied workers the use of Sukuna Park to hold a rally and instead had granted Coca Cola to host a promotion. This was despite the fact that FTUC had applied earlier than Coca Cola. It was only after when FTUC insisted, the Park was made available but then the Police simply wrote a one line letter to deny the permit. This is indeed a serious violation of our rights. We are supposed to be a democracy where people are free to protest within the laws. Government must explain why it has chosen to deny workers the right to protest. It's silence on this matter is unacceptable.

The National Executive Board of the FTUC met on the weekend and evaluated the situation facing workers and noted that critical issues facing workers were not being acted upon by Government. They remain:

1. Minimum Wage of \$4
2. Imposition of Individual Contracts and denial of Collective Bargaining
3. Delay in Labour Law Review
4. Right to Strike
5. Air Terminal Services Disputes
6. The decimation of Tripartism.

Attempts have been made to raise these issues at the Employment Relations Advisory Board but have fallen on deaf ears. Workers cannot wait forever for Government to act. The Board felt that these matters are of public interest and greater awareness needs to be made on these issues.

We hear Government stating that it has implemented the maternity leave, paternity leave and family care leave effective 1st January 2019. These are matters that FTUC has been negotiating at the ERAB board in the labour law review since 2013. They are not new matters except for the fact that FTUC was seeking to increase the annual leave but Government decided to call it family care leave. Either way they amount to the same. The increase in maternity leave is consistent with the ILO Maternity Protection Convention. However, FTUC believes that to attain decent work which Government has committed itself to doing, all 6 outstanding matters need to be addressed immediately.

The National Executive Committee therefore decided to organize a Workers' march through Suva and a Rally at Sukuna Park on the 29th of September 2018 at

1030am. Applications for a permit have been made to the Fiji Road Authority, the Suva City Council, The Police Department and the Divisional Commissioner for a permit.

Surprisingly, the Suva City Council has written back to advise that the Sukuna Park is now zoned as a recreational park and would therefore not allow a rally unless we sought permission from the Local Government Ministry. Clearly, the Suva City Council prioritizes recreation ahead of Human Rights and people's Constitutional Rights. There is something drastically wrong with this sort of thinking. We are aware that the Park is being used for other purposes without any problems but SCC believes it not to demonstrate for fundamental rights. FTUC will take this matter up with the SCC and the Ministry. Let us see whether true democracy exists in Fiji.

FTUC invites all workers and their families and those that support the workers' cause to participate in the march and the rally on the 29th of September 2018.

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