



## FIJI TRADES UNION CONGRESS

32 DES VOUEX ROAD, P.O. BOX 1418, SUVA, FIJI

**PRESIDENT:** Daniel Urai

**YOUR REF:** .....

**NATIONAL SECRETARY:** Felix Anthony

**OUR REF:** PUB/01

**DATE:** 28/06/19

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### Media Release

#### Stop the HARASSMENT against Unions

The National Secretary of Fiji Trades Union Congress, Mr. Felix Anthony, was taken into police custody last night at 10:30pm, June 27<sup>th</sup> from his home in Lautoka. Officials in plain clothes and in uniform approached the family last evening when they were gathered after dinner on the terrace, catching up after his return from Geneva early this week. The police informed Mr Anthony that these were pending inquiries and that these orders had come from Suva. The family was informed that he was being taken to Suva and asked to pack an overnight bag.

Upon our own investigation after the police escorted him away in a GR registered vehicle, we found out that he had been taken to Lautoka Courthouse cell-block. Our lawyer then could meet with him and they spent the night under police observation. At 2am, the lawyer left and was informed to return the next morning. The Lautoka police were replaced by those that arrived from Suva and at 430am, Mr Anthony was removed by these police and then driven to Suva. Mr Anthony was held at the Criminal Investigations Department Head Quarters to be questioned further on the Water Authority of Fiji termination issue. We were later informed that a charge had been laid by the Office of the DPP for alleged breach of the Public Order Act 1969, *“in relation to expiry of employment contracts of WAF workers which tended to create or foster public anxiety”*.

Mr Anthony was presented at the Magistrates Court around midday before Magistrate Waleen George and released on bail. He has been directed to appear before the Court again on August 15th.

On 27<sup>th</sup> June, Minister for Employment Productivity and Industrial Relations, Praveen Bala, stated that they had not interfered in any way with trade unions or conduct of their activities. This is contrary to the current situation that we are faced with.

**We URGENTLY call upon the government to:**

1. **Immediately stop all harassment**, intimidation and anti-union behavior against trade union officials
2. **Drop the irrational charges** sanctioned against Mr Anthony alleging that he *created fear and anxiety* by citing that Water Authority of Fiji workers had been *terminated*.
3. **Honour the Agreement** signed in Geneva in 2015 and the Joint Implementation Report in 2016, adopt fully the Committee on Application of Standards rulings made recently on 21<sup>st</sup> June in Geneva, and the February report of Committee of Experts on Application of Conventions and Recommendations on Fiji.
4. **Stop utilising the Public Order Act 1969** to suppress our fundamental rights of freedom of expression, peaceful freedom of assembly, and other human and trade union rights of citizens, particularly of workers
5. **Ensure that the police including the Criminal Investigations Department refrain from interfering** in the conduct of trade union activities or making judgements in employment related matters.
6. **Ensure that Fiji at all times complies with the Conventions** ratified and particularly the Core Conventions of the ILO.

**We call upon:**

- the ILO to take note of this development in view of the deadline set for Fiji in November and the Direct Contacts Mission be considered at the earliest possible opportunity.
- the international community, like minded organisations and the global trade union movement to intensify their campaign on Fiji, opposing the continued and unacceptable behavior that violates workers' and trade union rights.

We record our appreciation to the global trade union movement for their initiatives in applying pressure on the government to end such acts of gross violations.

**FTUC National Executive Board**

*All Correspondence to be addressed to the National Secretary*  
*Phone: (679) 3315377, 3315402, 7975377 / Email: [ftucns@ftuc.org.fj](mailto:ftucns@ftuc.org.fj)*