

“Release the Maruti 13”: the demand rung out worldwide on this May Day

Under various forms, specific to each country, the appeal launched by the International Workers Committee (IWC) has been heard

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on November 19, 20 and 21 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:

Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

In India

In India of course where, as one of our correspondents indicates: *“On this May 1st, in demonstrations across the whole country, workers unanimously joined in on the demand that the Maruti 13, the prisoners of class struggle, be released (...) Such has always been the fight of the working class: the 8-hour workday – the demand that sparked the May 1st day – was not granted after “discussions” and not through employers' generosity. It was wrenched by the workers' audacious struggle, through the martyrdom of the Chicago workers and many others.”*

In Afghanistan

The Left Radical of Afghanistan (LRA) has expressed *“most particularly our sympathy with the 13 workers and trade unionists of Maruti Suzuki, sentenced to life in India for merely defending their rights”*.

In Belgium

Several union members and elected officers have sent messages to the jailed Indian trade unionists.

In Belarus

During the rally called in Gomel city, a resolution

was adopted by the two hundred who participated for the immediate release of the 13 jailed Maruti Suzuki workers.

In the United States of America

No less than fifty activists and elected officers of trade union, political and Black organisations, either individually or collectively, addressed the 13 condemned Maruti workers. They referred to the resolution voted by the AFL-CIO San Francisco trade union council, which *“calls on the Indian authorities to drop all the charges and overturn the sentences” passed on the trade union activists”*.

In France

Throughout France, during the May 1st marches and rallies, several thousands of workers, trade union and political activists endorsed a message sent to the Maruti 13. Among those signatures, several hundreds were collected during the Paris demonstration, 213 in the Côtes d'Armor, 45 in Valenciennes and 62 in Lille, 38 in Chalon sur Saône and 17 in Auxerre, 154 in Nancy and 165 at the *Fête du Sous-sol Lorrain* event, 127 in Orléans, 21 in Strasbourg, 46 in Dax, 65 in Dijon, 15 in Bourg-en-Bresse, and others.



May Day in the Philippines

In Britain

Doreen McNally, the former secretary of the Liverpool Women of the Waterfront association of dockers' wives during the long 1995 strike, wrote that she is *"disgusted at a verdict that made trade unionism a crime, not a human right."*

(...) On May Day we acknowledge the struggle of the working class, the sacrifice, victories and defeats". On the other hand, fifty members and national officers of the British trade union movement declare : "May our message of support join with a thousand others like it, and may you feel the strength that comes from knowing that there are others behind you (...)"

In Italy

A solidarity message was sent to the jailed 13 by the Italian delegates to the Mumbai Conference: *"Today, you are the victims of repression, as a consequence of your rightful and courageous action to organise a genuine trade union and to fight for working class rights."*

In the Philippines

During the May 1st marches, the Workers' Party (PM) brandished banners with the demand that the Maruti 13 be immediately released (photo).

In Romania

A "workers' appeal" from fourteen trade union officers who met in Targu-Jiu, especially from the mining and energy sector, affirms among others: *"How can one accept that the law should protect criminals when workers and trade union leaders are tried and sentenced to life by blind justice?"* Miron Cozma and Constantin Cretan have endorsed this

appeal; they themselves spent years in prison for taking the lead of miner's marches against privatisation, and were released after a broad international campaign.

In Russia

Valentin Urusov, who was jailed in the Republic of Yakutia during close to five years for building an independent union, sent the following letter to Nambiath Vasudevan of the International Workers Committee: *"On behalf of the centre of Defence of trade union rights and in my own name, I wish to convey a most heartfelt message of support to my Indian brothers, especially those who are at the moment in prison. I myself spent close to five years in prison for defending the rights of the labouring people and I fully sympathise with what you are experiencing. Will you please give our vibrant greetings from Russia to those brothers (...) We may be jailed, beaten and killed, but nobody can break us! We are standing by you!"*

In Senegal

Among others, let us mention the messages of Ms Marina Binta Kabo (member of the Circle of Study and Research on Migrations), of Mbegane Sarr, member of the Senegal Social forum, and of Gnokhobaye Diouf, General secretary of the Black Peasants' Association.

In Sri Lanka

The New Leninist-Marxist Democratic Party explains that one of the slogans chanted during the May First Marches in Sri Lanka was: *"To the Narendra Modi regime in India: should organising a trade union be punished by a life sentence ?"*

In Zimbabwe

Several activists who are meeting on May 1st address Indian workers: *"Workers worldwide must demand the immediate overturning of this sentence, as its sole purpose is to defend the interests of the Suzuki multinational corporation."*

PAKISTAN

In Lahore, 2,000 workers with the APTUF despite a ban on the May Day march.

Rubina Jamil, General Secretary of the APTUF federation and Anwer Gujjar, from the rail workers union affiliated to the APTUF, have sent information on the attempt by the Pakistani authorities to forbid the rally planned at the Lahore Press Club.

The ban was allegedly in the name of "combating terrorism", which is activated in a climate where the government has just signed an agreement with the World Bank and the IMF purposing to privatise all the public enterprises. The leadership of the APTUF called a special conference and came to the decision to maintain the rally. On May 1st, the police forces surrounded the factories where APTUF members are active. But after several hours of negotiating, over 2,000 workers among whom numerous women, were able to meet with the union to demand *"a 100% wage raise now"*, *"No to the IMF, No to the world Bank"* and to demand *"peace and to stop privatisations"*, among others.

THE PHILIPPINES

Total prohibition of agency-hiring and fixed-term employment

Press Statement

We are publishing below excerpts from the press release we received from the Partido Manggagawa – The Workers Party of the Philippines, endorser of the Mumbai Conference Manifesto.

This press release was published by the coalition of the Philippines labour organisations – NAGKAISA, after the joint conference they held on May 1st with the participation of the Workers Party.

The administration of President Rodrigo Roa Duterte vowed to put an end to the despicable practice of agency-hiring. On wages, he promised the abolition of provincial rate system which for decades, created inequity and wide disparities in wages between regions and provinces of the country.

We actively participated in all the workshops, meetings, summits, and Congressional hearings organized by the government to make sure that the interest and specific concerns of the working class on the issue of endo and other rights are recognized and properly addressed by official bodies. (...)

Did workers get what they deserve from this level of engagement with the government? (...)

Our demand today is for the President to draw up an Executive Order in line with the workers' demand for total prohibition of agency-hiring and fixed-term employment (...)

Furthermore, the government has to finally resolve the long-running dispute on outsourcing between the Philippine Airlines (PAL) and the PAL Employees Association (PALEA) (...)

We will never back down in pressing for these demands through collective negotiations and mass actions.