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INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

Fiji to Finally Allow Visit by ILO Mission

Brussels, 6 October 2014 (ITUC OnLine): Fiji's Commodore Frank Bainimarama, reinstalled as Prime Minister following a deeply flawed election last month, is set to allow an ILO mission into the country to probe labour rights violations. A 2012 ILO mission was expelled from the country when its members refused to allow the authorities to dictate how it would conduct its investigation.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said, "A last-minute concession from Fiji's military rulers to agree to an ILO mission is intended to stop the UN body launching a Commission of Inquiry in November. The 'deepening authoritarianism', of which the ILO forewarned, is still very much the order of the day in Fiji, and we can expect that a mission will find abundant evidence of this. Fiji needs to restore internationally recognised labour standards in full if it is to avoid an ILO Commission of Inquiry."

Commodore Bainimarama seized power in a 2006 military coup, and has repeatedly cracked down on workers and their unions, sweeping away fundamental rights through executive decrees which cannot be challenged in the courts. The Essential National Industries Decree, for example, was used to annul existing collective agreements and force unions to rerun elections for new leadership that required the approval of the Prime Minister. The government also mobilised the military to threaten and harass workers, and has resorted to imprisoning and beating union leaders.

The deeply flawed September 2014 election was marred by the complete absence of a free media, intimidation by public officials and extreme campaign restrictions placed on civil society organisations, backed up by stiff criminal sanctions.

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