



## 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:** 20/12/13

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### **PRESS RELEASE No. 56-15-13**

#### **Regime Again Reneges on Promises to ILO**

It has become normal for the Fiji Regime to make big talk of progress and promises internationally and do quite the opposite within Fiji. The imposition of the Essential Industries Decree and now its amendment dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2013 flies in the face of assurances given by the Regime to respect workers' rights and act as a responsible member of the ILO. The FTUC condemns the regimes decision.

The Essential Industries Decree Amendment now includes all Pine Industry Companies, Local Governments, Airports Fiji Limited, Hardwood Corporation and National Fire Authority. These workers have had their long standing rights completely taken away including the right to collective bargaining and all provisions of the Employment Relations Promulgation. These restrictions include minimum conditions, dispute settling procedures, excess to courts, tribunals, protection from discrimination and unfair treatment, sexual harassment and the list goes on. Civil Servants have had these rights stripped since July 2009. This is a flagrant violation of Core ILO Conventions and human rights. Fiji as a member country of United Nations and ILO has an obligation to respect these rights. Fiji has been cited by the ILO Governing Body last March as being one of the five worst offenders of workers' rights in the world. In the October Governing Body Fiji was again cited as being one of the three worst violators of workers' rights. No doubt the latest imposition of the amendment to the Essential Industries Decree is going to raise further concerns around the world on the Regimes irresponsible behavior. A record, that is not to be proud of and a dis-service to our country.

More recently, the Pine Industry managed to obtain a Forestry Stewardship Certification (FSC) which is a requirement for the export of pine chips. Part of the certification process includes respect for workers' rights. The denial of these rights through the imposition of the Decree may impact the ability of Tropic Wood to export its chips. The regime must take responsibility for its actions.

The Pine Industry Executive Chairman has announced a 10% wage increase for workers effective 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014. This is supposedly compensation for the removal of all workers' rights. This in itself is an insult to workers. The rights of workers are paramount and cannot be bought for a few pieces of silver. We are advised that other companies may do the same in an attempt to buy workers loyalty. These rights are not for sale and the FTUC condemns such insulting strategy employed by the regime and its cronies. Workers in Fiji deserve more respect and dignity. These rights are internationally recognized and FTUC will continue in its effort to ensure the restoration of these rights.

The FTUC recognizes that this is another assault on Trade Unions and Workers to weaken their solidarity for political reasons. As such, a political solution may also be required to address such blatant abuse of power and suppression of workers in Fiji. The FTUC calls on workers to remain united and face such challenges with determination and courage. Ours has always been a struggle. It has only become more difficult with a dictatorship. A report has been filed with the Committee on Freedom of Association at the ILO.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Felix Anthony', with a stylized, cursive script.

**Felix Anthony**  
**National Secretary**