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More trouble in paradise: harassment of Fijian trade unions by military Government worsens

Australian unions have condemned the latest attack on workers rights in Fiji with new reports that a regular meeting of the nation's peak union body was earlier today broken up by police.

Reliable sources have informed the ACTU that a meeting in Nadi of the National Council of the Fiji Trades Union Congress was prevented from going ahead by police, who revoked a permit to hold the meeting.

The latest attack by the military regime came just hours after the FTUC met with a high-level delegation of the International Labour Organisation, which is investigating human and worker rights violations in Fiji.

It is the latest in a series of incidents, and follows the recent arrest of the President of the FTUC, Daniel Urai, and another union official for meeting with holiday resort workers who are seeking a collective agreement.

Last month, the military regime pushed through a draconian new decree which further restricts workers' rights.

The Essential National Industries (Employment) Decree bans all industrial action, bans unions from representing workers, voids all collective agreements, and scraps minimum wages, conditions and overtime pay.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the action to prevent the FTUC from meeting today was disgraceful.

"That this took place while the ILO is actually in Fiji shows the total contempt the Bainimarama regime has for basic human rights, and for the opinion of the international community," Ms Kearney said.

"From all accounts, a meeting between the ILO and the FTUC was fruitful, yet just hours later the regime has shown its true colours by sending the police into bust up a peaceful meeting of union leaders.

"The situation for workers in Fiji is just going from bad to worse. The world cannot allow this abuse and disregard of human and workers' rights to continue."

Ms Kearney said Australian unions were closely monitoring developments in Fiji and talking to their international counterparts about potential courses of action to put pressure on the military regime to restore respect for human rights.

Media contact:

Mark Phillips ph (03) 9664 7266 or 0422 009 011; mphillips@actu.org.au