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Australian unions remain steadfast in pursuit of human and labour rights in Fiji

Australian unions will continue to steadfastly pursue human and labour rights in Fiji, despite the military regime's refusal to allow entry to an Australian and New Zealand union fact-finding mission.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the Fiji Government's actions flew in the face of its claims it had nothing to hide, and only served to illustrate it had no interest in engaging with the international community about human and labour rights.

The delegation, led by ACTU President Ged Kearney and her New Zealand counterpart Helen Kelly, was denied permission to enter Fiji at Nadi Airport yesterday afternoon, despite an open invitation from the Fijian Government.

"We are disappointed the Fiji Government has defied international concerns about the removal of workers' labour rights and violence toward union leaders.

"But their actions only make us more determined to safeguard the human and labour rights of Fijian workers and their communities.

"If Prime Minister Frank Bainimarama has nothing to hide, then why would he refuse us entry? Even more concerning was the refusal to allow the delegation consular support and the confiscation of our mobile phones.

"This is hardly the type of action we would expect from an open and accountable democracy.

"Australian unions have been concerned for some time about the treatment of Fijian workers and allege violence towards union leaders."

The delegation had planned a three-day mission to investigate the worsening human and labour rights record in Fiji.

It had planned to meet with Fijian workers and unions, civil society and church organisations, and business executives, and had hoped to meet with the Fiji Government.

"It is unimaginable that the Fiji Government continues to defy basic human rights in the face of growing international outrage," Ms Kearney said.

"Just last week, the International Labour Organisation intervened to safeguard human and labour rights in Fiji, passing an unprecedented resolution condemning the actions of the Fijian Government to persecute union leaders and restrict fundamental labour rights.

"The resolution was backed by union, Government and employer representatives, including the ACTU and the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"We can assure Mr Bainimarama that we will not be intimidated by his tactics and we will not back down in our mission to defend the rights of Fijians."

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