

Wednesday, 22 January 2014

Australian workers call on Cambodian Government to urgently investigate deaths of garment workers during strike action

Australian workers will deliver a letter to the Cambodian Ambassador tomorrow to seek an urgent meeting to discuss the Government response to the killing of at least four garment workers during recent strike action.

ACTU President Ged Kearney said the international community would not stand by silently as workers are killed fighting for basic conditions.

"The situation in Cambodia is deeply worrying and Australian Unions join with Unions from around the world to condemn the actions of the Cambodian Government and call on them to urgently investigate these unnecessary deaths and increase the grossly inadequate minimum wage."

TCFUA National Secretary Michele O'Neil said Cambodian garment workers are amongst the lowest paid in the world and some have now paid the ultimate price in their campaign to lift the minimum wage.

"The Cambodian Government must act immediately to support an independent investigation into the horrific deaths of workers who were simply asking for fair pay during strikes on 3 January and also release all 23 detained unionists," Ms O'Neil said.

"The Government must also set a minimum wage on which workers and their families can meet their basic needs.

"Garment workers in Cambodia should be paid a living wage which reflects the true cost of living. Instead they survive on poverty wages."

"Many Australians would be wearing clothes made in these Cambodian factories with brands such as Kmart, Target, Pacific Brands and Big W all relying upon Cambodian manufacturing.

"With the horrific scenes of garment workers in Bangladesh only last year still fresh in our minds Australian companies should join the international brands demanding action from the Cambodian Government."

Ms O'Neil said that Australian unions support the international trade union mission to Cambodia that has demanded the establishment of a credible, independent inquiry to investigate the killings and for those responsible to be held accountable.

The Mission has also called for urgent action to raise the minimum wage and a government pledge to fully respect ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association, which Cambodia has ratified.

"Research shows that Cambodia's garment industry has an annual turnover of US\$5.1bn so it's clear they can afford to pay more than the monthly minimum wage of US\$ 100," Ms O'Neil said.

IndustriALL research shows that a minimum of US\$260 is needed to cover basic expenses of a family of four so urgent action is needed for these workers.

Details for tomorrow's protest:
10:30am, Thursday 23 January 2014

Outside the Cambodian Embassy in Canberra, 5 Canterbury Crescent

Contact: Michele O'Neil: 0419 338 853

