

Thursday 18 January 2018

Fiji's history of workers' rights abuses must not be repeated

The ACTU is calling on the Government of Fiji to take action over the illegal treatment of Air Terminal Services (ATS) workers, who have been locked out by management and replaced by unqualified workers, potentially endangering Australian travellers, at a rally today in Sydney.

President of the Australian Council of Trade Unions, Ged Kearney, is speaking at the rally in Sydney at 11 am today in front of the Fijian Embassy in support of the workers.

Since December 16, 2017 workers who carry out essential baggage handling, check in, engineering and catering services for all airlines have been locked out by the management of the government-owned ATS.

The locked-out workers, who, as shareholders, own 49% of the company, returned from a shareholders' meeting on 16th December to find themselves barred from entering. The workers are being targeted because they have raised issues about the company's poor management.

Quotes attributable to ACTU President, Ged Kearney:

"The fact that government has the ability to fix this situation but refuses to do so is concerning given the history of labour abuses in Fiji which the international trade union movement had hoped had changed.

"This illegal action by the management of ATS is not only a clear violation of basic workers' rights in Fiji, it is also a risk to the safety of Australian tourists. Since the lock out, management has been bringing in unqualified and unvetted workers to carry out vital work on Australian flights.

"Workers' concerns include not having received a pay rise for 11 years, and management failure to resolve workplace grievances including sexual harassment claims. It is illegal for them to be persecuted for raising these concerns and a free and democratic society should not support it.

"The Fiji Labour Minister should intervene immediately and put a stop to the lockout and our Government should use its diplomatic relations with the Fiji Government to resolve this dispute."

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