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IHLO-HTUR/DM-JK

13 March 2008

Detention, beating and criminal charges against workers in Panyu (Guangdong)

Dear Mayor Zhang Guangning,

With reference to my letter of 6 March regarding the sentencing of some thirteen workers to varying terms of administrative detention announced on 28 February 2008, I am writing to highlight another disturbing incident and follow up on the detention cases mentioned in my previous letter.

Firstly, with regard to the 13 workers against whom sentences had recently been announced in connection with protests at a shoe factory, a handbag factory and another unnamed factory in Panyu, we have since found out that the five workers from the shoe factory – now believed to be the Guangzhou Li Chang Footwear Company Limited - Shi X, Peng X Cui (female), Shi X Zhi, Wang X and Zhang X Yin, have been charged under the criminal law with criminal offences relating to unauthorized demonstration and assembly and disturbing public order. As such we understand they face trial and possible prison sentences of up to seven years.

The ITUC strongly condemns the criminalization of legitimate and peaceful workers' protests.

Secondly, another incident in Panyu district has come to the attention of the ITUC. According to media reports, some 3 to 4,000 workers from the Casio Electronics Factory



protested outside their factory on the morning of 6 March 2008. We understand that the workers were dispersed by around 1,000 armed riot-police, and other public security officials. Some 20 workers - including women workers - were reportedly injured during the clashes.

The Casio labour dispute began on 5 March when the company informed workers that the basic wages would be raised from 580 Yuan to 690 Yuan in accordance with new regulations. However, workers then discovered that the company simultaneously cut their monthly bonus from between 85 and 200 Yuan down to between 5 and 60 Yuan. New workers, who do not receive a bonus, saw their monthly allowance (similar to a bonus) cut from 30 Yuan to 25 Yuan.

Workers, angry at the deceptive means to reduce wages, attempted to negotiate with the management. No resolution was found and on the morning of 6 March the workers launched a strike and protested outside the factory. Shortly afterwards around 1,000 security officials (including several hundred riot police) came to disperse the workers.

Several workers were taken away by police and are believed to remain in detention. We note that in some photographs of the incident at least two women workers were escorted away by police.

According to independent sources, it is believed that several policemen are now stationed inside the factory; workers are not allowed to gather in groups and their telephone conversations are monitored. Management reportedly offered a 100 RMB bonus to all workers who returned to work on 7 March but later that day, after workers returned, management informed the workers that they had cancelled the bonus in question. Workers who wish to leave the factory's employ have been asked to fill in applications to leave but so far none of these have been approved by management.

We ask that you make known further details of the incident and in particular why workers were detained during what appears to be the peaceable exercise of their right to freedom of expression and association. We also ask that you raise with the Casio Electronics Factory management their apparent flouting of local regulations on wages and ensure that management adheres to the letter and spirit of Chinese law.

The administrative detention of the workers involved in the collective protests announced on 28 February, the criminal charges against the five Guangzhou Li Chang Footwear Company Limited workers and the subsequent force used against the Casio Electronics Factory workers involved in the 6 March protest all reveal a disturbing trend of increasingly harsh methods of repression used against workers peaceably exercising their legitimate right to freedom of expression and association in the Panyu area. We urge the provincial government of Guangdong to investigate the methods used by the Panyu district authorities and rectify the situation as soon as possible.

Once again we wish to remind you that the pursuit of a harmonious society and in particular the pursuit of harmonious relations in the workplace is impossible in a climate which sees the arrest of ordinary workers claiming their lawful rights and dues – instead what is needed is a society which allows for freedom of association and a voice for all stakeholders in Chinese society.

With best regards,

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Guy Ryde". The signature is written in a cursive style with a checkmark-like flourish at the end of the name.

General Secretary

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