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Mr. Michael B. Mukasey  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
USA

HTUR/JB

18 March 2008

### **Indian workers trafficked to US**

Dear Mr. Attorney General,

The International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), which represents 311 affiliated member organisations, including the AFL-CIO, with a total membership of 168 million workers in 156 countries and territories, is extremely concerned about the situation of Indian migrant workers on the Signal International shipyard in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

According to our information, about a hundred Indian pipe-fitters and welders have fallen victim to deceptive recruitment practices. In Mumbai they had been promised decent work as well as permanent visas (“green cards”) for themselves and their families, but their preconceived American Dream turned out to be a nightmare. The recruiter deceived and coerced them into travelling on temporary working and residence permits, which did not allow them to bring their families or to change employers. For facilitating these visas, the recruiter demanded up to 20,000 USD, threatening to destroy or deface their passports if they questioned him. Upon arrival in the United States, these workers were forced to live in guarded, overcrowded and isolated labour camps with up to 24 men in one trailer. Their ten-month visas, combined with a deduction of 1,000 USD from their salary for inferior food and accommodation, barely allowed them to pay back the loans they were forced to take, often after selling their houses, to pay for their recruitment fees. In spite of their precarious migration status, these workers have shown to be prepared to risk everything to expose their situation by protesting and marching to the shipyard on 10 March 2008.

Together with the workers, the ITUC is very concerned that this employer will retaliate by contacting Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and try to get the local law enforcement agency to cooperate with ICE in an attempt to have the workers deported



and so avoid legal liability. We urge you to ensure that there is no retaliatory abuse of legal proceedings in this or any other manner.

We urge the U.S. Department of Justice to order a criminal investigation into this case of trafficking of workers for labour exploitation. Only such an investigation can ensure that the perpetrators are brought to justice and guarantee that these workers receive the protection to which they are entitled as victims of trafficking. Finally, only a proper investigation will ensure that this international trafficking ring is properly exposed and held to account.

We trust that you will pay proper attention to this serious matter.

Yours sincerely,

General Secretary

Cc : Mr. John Sweeney, President American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)  
Mr. Umraomal Purohit, General Secretary Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS)  
Mr. G. Sanjeeva Reddy, President Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC)  
Ms. Namrata Bali, General Secretary Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)  
Mr. Daniel Sutherland, U.S. Office for Civil Rights and Civil Liberties  
Mr. R.K. Singh, Protector General of Emigrants, India  
Consulate General of India, Houston, U.S.  
Mr. Ronen Sen, Ambassador of India, Washington DC, U.S.  
Mr. Oscar Fernandes, Minister of Labour and Employment, India  
Mr. Vayalar Ravi, Minister of Overseas Affairs, India