



To: **Mr Satoshi Sasaki**
Director ad interim
ILO Country Office for the Pacific Islands
Suva - FIJI

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File Reference: RP/CR/CV

Contact: rights@world-psi.org

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Dear Mr Sasaki

VIOLATION OF FREEDOM OF ASSOCIATION RIGHTS IN FIJI

I am writing on behalf of Public Services International (PSI), the international trade union federation representing public sector workers in 153 countries, including Fiji, and its more than 20 million affiliates around the world.

PSI voices its strongest concerns that trade union rights in Fiji appear once again to be under threat. We are alarmed to hear this time that fire fighters in Fiji are being targeted and are at risk of losing crucial trade union rights through an apparent concerted effort to de-unionise them and strip away their collective bargaining rights.

Currently the Fijian Public Service Association (FPSA) covers fire fighters who are employed by the government department, the National Fire Authority (NFA). Members have reported that the NFA is embarking on a process that involve violations of trade union rights, which include:

- asking fire fighters to sign over to an in-house union, a union run through the NFA, and renounce their membership of the independent FPSA;
- refusing check off, therefore starving the union of membership fees;
- fire fighters being forced on to individual contracts and threatening to terminate those that do not sign.

These are flagrant violations of ILO Conventions 87 and 98, ratified by Fiji, which cannot and must not be allowed to continue. In this regard, PSI is concerned that the Fijian Employment Relations Advisory Board (ERAB) seems to have been unable to intervene in this clear breach of ILO conventions.

We also received information that workers from the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority are also subject of similar violations.

We would like you to remind the government of Fiji that situations in which the authorities interfere in the activities of a freely constituted trade union by establishing alternative workers' organizations and inciting workers using unfair means to change their membership violate the right of workers to establish and join organizations of their own choosing.

Therefore, we request that the Government respect its obligations under ratified ILO Conventions 87 and 98, so that fire fighters are able to exercise freely their right to freedom of association. In this respect, we urge the Government to:

- Refrain from any interference which would restrict the rights provided for in the ILO Conventions or impede their lawful exercise;
- Refrain from according a more favourable or unfavourable treatment to any given organization as compared with others, aimed at influencing the choice of workers as to the organization which they intend to join;
- Refrain from taking any disciplinary action against fire fighters who have exercised their democratic rights under the ILO conventions;
- Intervene immediately by directing the NFA to cease its creation of an “in-house” union;
- Revert individual fire fighters back to their collective agreement and to investigate any acts of intimidation.

PSI will be following this events closely and will not hesitate to resort to the ILO supervisory mechanisms and its affiliated organizations in the region if the situation does not improve.

Respectfully,



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