



Industrial Workers' Federation of Myanmar

Responsibilities and Rights

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IWFM position and requests to all multinational brands and suppliers

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Due to the martial law introduced by the military regime, workers in our sector are facing growing uncertainty. It is quite impossible for them to return to work and fulfil their contractual obligations, since military are shooting to people on the streets and transports from villages to industrial zones are suspended. More over trade union representatives are facing a double danger: military shooting and arrests if they return to work together with the impossibility of continuing their trade union functions.

What is the situation?

Many workers are afraid to go back to work, because of the total lack of security in the industrial zones. Thousands of workers have returned to their home villages during the violent crackdown taken place in Hlaing Thar Yar on 14-15 March, when military killed over 100 people in that industrial area. Many trade union leaders had to go into hiding, because military started searching for them at factory level and at their homes. For many of them it is now difficult to return to work, due to lack of transportation and due to the many military checkpoints on the roads, where people are checked and arbitrarily detained or shot.

In Hlaing Thar Yar, the military is arbitrarily stopping workers on the streets demanding that they handle their phones to soldiers or under threat of arrest they obliging workers, if they do not have phones, to pay 20,000 MMK. During the 14-15 March crackdown, around 37 Chinese owned factories were burned or damaged. Two more garment factories in Hlaing Thar Yar were burned on April 7, leaving 16 people dead at the hands of the military.

Also due to these events, many workers are afraid to go back to work, fearing that their factories may also get burned in the future. The military regime cut phone lines and mobile internet, so it is nearly impossible for workers to inform their employers, if they cannot return to work. Due to cut of communication, even union members cannot contact their union representatives and inform the employers.

Despite the many challenges, in March, most factories have re-opened their plants and, in many cases already, their management are using the current situation, and the factory regulations, to lay off workers and trade union representatives, for not attending work for more than 3 days. In this way they avoid to pay severance allowance, that they should have to pay, in case of regular retrenchments and in the same time they get rid of trade union representatives.

Under normal circumstances, workers lay off is legal, in case unjustified absence for more than 3 days. But in this situation, it is not fair that workers are dismissed without severance, if they don't attend work due to security reasons.

We know that, due to reduction of orders, many suppliers need to retrench workers. Therefore, in this situation we are asking the brands to urgently request their suppliers not to terminate workers, without severance pay.

How we need to address to the situation

In this situation we need to protect workers. We are calling on all multinational brands to work with unions and representatives of all brand suppliers in Myanmar, to protect workers who can't go back to work (for whatever reason: because they are in hiding, back in their villages or because they don't dare to come to work, etc.)

We are requesting the following from brands and suppliers.

IWFM requests to all brands

1. Brands should request their suppliers to give workers unpaid leave for an agreed period of time so that they will not lose their jobs.
2. In case of lay off due to the conflict situation, brands should protect workers from termination without severance.
3. Brands should inform all suppliers that they will not be penalized, if they deliver late the ordered goods, due to the situation.
4. Brands should ask suppliers to receive the list of all workers who have been terminated or not been paid in full to the brands.
5. In case of disputes on termination cases, Brands should require the employers to provide the list of all terminated workers.

IWFM requests to all brand suppliers (Employers):

1. Employers should not put pressure on workers to return to work, if the security situation does not allow their safe return to the workplace.
2. Employers should give workers unpaid leave for an agreed period of time.
3. Employers should refrain from terminating workers without severance pay if they do not come to work because of security concerns.
4. Employers should send the list of all workers who have been terminated or not been paid in full to the brands.
5. In case of disputes on termination cases, employers should provide the list of all terminated workers to brands.

These commitments by the brands and suppliers are crucial to help protect workers from being harassed or killed when trying to return to work and to protect them from termination without severance pay if they cannot return to work because of security concerns.

IWFM calls on all multinational brands and suppliers to work together to protect workers from the dangers of being shot, injured or arrested in a desperate attempt to come to work – out of fear of being terminated without severance.

IWFM is ready to support for any discussion and negotiation with brands and suppliers as needed and support in agreed way. We look forward to the response from brands and suppliers to work together for the protection of workers.



Khaing Zar Aung

President