

CHINA

Some activists have been imprisoned because of their trade union activity. One of them, Meng Han, has been in jail for 16 months. In the wake of the Mumbai conference debates, a call for the organization of an independent commission of enquiry has just been made public.

Who are we ?

● The International Workers Committee Against War, Exploitation, for a Workers' International (IWC) was set up at the World Conference held in Mumbai (India) on Novembre 19, 20 and 21 gathering delegates from 28 countries.

● The IWC was set up on the basis of the Mumbai Manifesto against war, exploitation and precarious labour which was endorsed by labour activist and trade union and political organisations officers from 46 countries (*)

● Its continuations committee is composed of labour activists from all political/ trade union backgrounds:
Innocent Assogba (Benin),
Alan Benjamin (USA),
Colia Clark (USA),
Constantin Cretan (Romania),
Berthony Dupont (Haiti),
Ney Ferreira (Brazil),
Daniel Gluckstein (France),
Rubina Jamil (Pakistan),
Apo Leung (China),
Gloria Gracida (Mexico),
M.A. Patil (India),
Mandlenkosi Phangwa (Azania),
Klaus Schüller (Germany),
Jung Sikhwa (Korea),
John Sweeney (Great Britain),
Mark Vassilev (Russia),
Nambiath Vasudevan (India).

(*) Afghanistan, Argentina, Austria, Azania, Belarus, Bangladesh, Belgium, Benin, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Chile, China, Czech Republic, Ecuador, France, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Haiti, Hungary, Iceland, India, Ireland, Italy, Ivory Coast, Korea, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Rwanda, Senegal, Sweden, Switzerland, Togo, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, USA, Venezuela, Zimbabwe.

May Day Appeal

“We declare ourselves ready and willing to travel to China to conduct an independent investigation”

We the undersigned are trade union officers engaged, along with our organisations, in the defense of labour rights in our respective countries.

- Whereas workers, whatever their home country cannot disregard the plight of their brothers and sisters anywhere throughout the world,

- Whereas the right to organise is an unalienable right and has no borders,

- Whereas the trials concerning Meng Han, Zeng Feiyang, Zhu Xiaomei and Tang Huanxing raise numerous questions about the right to defense, prior-to-trial detention conditions and pressure on the defendants' relatives and those close to them,

- Whereas numerous voices have risen up in the labour movement worldwide to demand that they be released:

We hereby declare ourselves ready and willing to travel to China to conduct an independent fact finding mission.

We wish to establish the truth and to inform the people worldwide of that truth.

- We wish to meet Meng Han in prison, as well as the activists who have been released.

- We also wish to meet the judicial authorities and the government officials of the Guangdong province.

- We wish to interview the Guangdong workers' associations and the leaders of the All China Federation of Trade Unions.

- We shall devote full attention to all the factual information given by all those concerned; we will study the relevant documents.

- We are deeply convinced that it is up to the Chinese people and them only to take decisions on their future and the future of their country, without any interference from foreign influences.

Our action is guided by no other consideration than the need for international solidarity between workers, which is the founding principle of the international labour movement.

This is the reason why we ask the authorities of the People's Republic of China to grant visas to our international workers' delegation, so they may travel to Guangzhou.

May 1st, 2017

Pascal Corbex, trade-unionist*, (France)

John Sweeney, UNITE (Great Britain)

Chris Silvera, Local 808, International Brotherhood of Teamsters*, (USA)

Klaus Schuller, Workers' Commission of the German Social-Democratic Party (SPD) and EVG trade-unionist (Germany)

*In a personal capacity

I support the May Day Appeal for an independent workers' délégation in China

Name, first name _____

Union/Country _____

in a personal capacity *in the name of the union*

Mail _____

I provide a financial support _____

IBAN: FR76 3000 4003 5400 0304 6996 962 - Account: COMMISSION D ENQUETE CHINE

Contact address : **Alain Denizo c/o Commission Enquête Chine - 25, rue Ledion - 75014 Paris (France)**

Mail: comenchine@wanadoo.fr

Document : A Statement From Hong-Kong's Workers Organisations

Right to communicate violated:

Labour Activist has been detained and isolated for 16 months

Chinese labour activist Meng Han was sentenced to a prison term of 21 months by Panyu District Court of Guangzhou City on 3 November 2016, for “gathering crowds to disrupt public order” as he helped organize workers to defend their rights. He was then sent to serve his sentence in Shaoguan Prison of Guangdong Province and is expected to be released in September 2017. Together with the detention prior to the sentence, Meng has been detained for over 16 months. Since his detention on 3 December 2015, his family has attempted to visit him over a dozen times but in vain. No matter it was the No.1 Detention Centre of Guangzhou or Shaoguan Prison, the authorities denied his family’s rights to see him. In late March 2017, Meng’s parents visited Shaoguan Prison again and was told that Meng had been going through education and therefore could not be visited. Frustrated, his family made various complaints at the Bureau of Public Security and never received any feedback. Now, they start to feel extremely worried about Meng’s conditions.

In fact, Meng’s freedom has been deprived by the Chinese Government through unjust means. By violating his rights to communicate with the outside world, the Chinese authority has further violated Meng’s fundamental human rights and even its own legislation. Article 48 of China's Prison Law states, “A prisoner may, in accordance with the relevant regulations, meet with his relatives and guardians during the service of his sentence.”; UN Standard Minimum Rules for the Treatment of Prisoners also guarantees prisoners’ rights to communicate with the outside world, Rule 58 states, “Prisoners shall be allowed, under necessary supervision, to communicate with their family and friends at regular intervals:(a) By corresponding in writing and using, where available, telecommunication, electronic, digital and other means; and (b) By receiving visits.” During his 16-month detention, Meng was not allowed to see his family and his trial last year was conducted secretly, without his parents’ presence. Meng’s father tried to remit money to Meng through China Post (for him to spend in the prison) but the remittances were returned. Without Meng’s news for such a long time and being constantly worried about his son’s situation, Meng’s father became ill and was admitted to a hospital for over two weeks. At the time of writing, he remains hospitalized.

To silent the victims of its arbitrary detentions and violent crackdown against labour activists, Chinese Government turns a blind eye to its own legislation, as well as the international minimum standard. The HKCTU and labour organizations in Hong Kong strongly condemn the Chinese Government’s violation of Meng Han’s rights to communicate with his family. We urge all relevant authorities to do their utmost to safeguard Meng’s fundamental human rights and ensure his well-being in the prison. We further emphasize that Meng was working for a labour organization and worked to defend workers’ rights. His work should not be criminalized. We call on the Chinese Government to immediately withdraw all charges against Meng and unconditionally release Meng.

19th avril 2017

Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions
Asia Monitor Resource Centre
Worker Empowerment
Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour (SACOM)
Globalization Monitor
Labour Education and Service Network
Labour Action China
The Chinese Working Women’s Network

BURUNDI

Brutal slam down on students and their representatives

Public higher education students – from the Teacher Training School [the ENS], the Burundi University and the National Public Health Institute – had been engaged in a massive strike since the last days of March for the repeal of decree N° 100/18 passed on February 1st that aimed at “*reorganising the management system of grants for studies and training sessions*” - In reality, a measure to scrap grants and replace them by a “student loan” system imposed on Burundi by the European Union, the World Bank and the IMF. The previous attempts at implementing this measure had been defeated by repeated mobilisations of university and school students, parents and the population at large.

Following intimidation measures taken by the government, after a strike that lasted one month, ENS students resumed work on April 24th, meanwhile stating that they were willing to negotiate “*with the government and with the intervention of representatives of the people* (National Assembly and Senate – Ed. N.) *and of the population.*”. Five of their representatives were excluded from the ENS. At the University of Burundi, eight student delegates were excluded and five others are still detained in the Mpimba central prison under the charge of “*rebellious and conspiring against the security of the State*” by the high court of Mukaza. Students have been arrested and some have simply been disappeared.

Correspondent in Burundi

HUNGARY

Judit Szima, trade union activist under threat of being jailed

In the early 90s, the rights of public sector workers and the police forces started being massively threatened: among others, the system of retirement pension was overhauled, pensions were renamed “allowances” and sums had to be reimbursed by pensioners; the labour code was “reformed” at the expense of wage-earners. In 2004, a group of disgruntled policemen created Tettrekéz (“Ready for Actions”), a union which grew to be the sector’s most important union and which now organises lawyers, teachers, and civil servants, etc. For years now, it has defended the interests of workers and has refused to endorse agreements which disadvantaged workers, and has organised marches and demonstrations.

A first attack against the union occurred at the time when the government was under the “Socialist” Party, an attack against the union’s secretary who was charged with “rebellion” and who was demoted. Attacks continued under the conservative government and leaders were indicted. After an eight month prior-to-trial prison term and then an obligation to move from her place of living, in conditions marked by multiple miscarriages of justice, “missing documents” and untrustworthy testimony, the general secretary, Judit Szima, together with 9 other trade union office bearers, was sentenced to a five-year term plus a 22 million Forint (70 000 €) fine. In spite of numerous protests from trade unions in Hungary and abroad, Judit Szima, a widow who is alone to raise her under-age son, is to start serving her prison sentence as of May 11th 2017. An attack against a trade unionist, an attack against a trade union, is an attack against each and every worker. A call to the international working class movement has been launched.

Correspondent in Hungary