

“We should be outraged by what is happening in India.”

US, Canadian autoworkers speak in defense of framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers

A reporting team
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The campaign by the International Committee of the Fourth International to defend the framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers in India is winning support from autoworkers in North America.

On March 18, the Gurgaon district court in the northern Indian state of Haryana sentenced 13 Maruti Suzuki workers to life imprisonment on bogus murder charges and handed down heavy prison sentences against 18 other workers on lesser charges.

The case against the Maruti Suzuki workers has been concocted by the multinational auto company, working in tandem with state officials to make an example of these workers. Their only crime was fighting against the brutal conditions at India’s largest car manufacturer. The ICFI, which has launched an online petition, has called upon workers and youth throughout the world to fight for their release.

World Socialist Web Site reporters spoke to autoworkers in the Detroit area as well as to workers in Ontario, Canada about the significance of the defense campaign for the interests of the working class as a whole.

A Socialist Equality Party campaign team spoke to autoworkers Friday at the Fiat Chrysler Warren Truck Assembly Plant north of Detroit. They distributed copies of the most recent *WSWS Autoworker Newsletter* with a statement on the Maruti Suzuki case.

A young worker told the WSWs she was “horrified” by the facts that she had just heard about the Maruti Suzuki frame-up. “They don’t want us to know anything about this. It seems like the union has flipped over to management.”

Another young worker stopped to speak to the WSWs. He said, “Everyone wants the same thing, but we are strong when we are united. They are always telling us they are going to send our work overseas, so I can see that international unity is important. No one should be forced to work in an unsafe environment “

The worker said he appreciated the *WSWS Autoworker*

Newsletter for keeping workers informed about the case and other important issues. “It definitely lets us know what is happening. They don’t let us know anything in there,” he said pointing to the factory, “besides what they want us to know.”

Several workers noted the complete silence by the media as well as the United Auto Workers on the Maruti Suzuki case. “They don’t want us to know anything about this,” one worker said. “They don’t want us to read and know the truth.”

Jenny, a former temporary worker at General Motor’s Indianapolis Stamping Plant, also spoke in support of the Maruti Suzuki workers. In 2010, the workers at her plant fought against wage cuts imposed by the company with the collaboration of the United Auto Workers. The workers won support all over the world for their fight.

“Arresting these workers and giving them life sentences, all that is is a fear campaign to make them silent. The Maruti Suzuki workers are fighting for what they deserve.

“The government in India wanted to kill the workers at first, for standing up for what’s right. That is terrifying. What they are fighting makes what we faced in Indianapolis look like a cakewalk. We stood up against GM and the UAW that wanted us to take a 50 percent pay cut. They shut our plant. We had to move to another state to get work.

“It doesn’t matter if you are American or Indian—people have to put that aside. We are all fighting for a decent living, to stop breaking our backs for the companies and to get what we deserve to live. The bigger companies use scare tactics to keep people down.

“We’re told workers in other countries are taking away our jobs. No, they are trying to live. They have babies to feed and bills to pay. It’s not about ‘Made in India’ or ‘Made in America.’ The companies and unions tell us to shut up and be glad you have a job. That’s what the UAW told us in Indianapolis. No, we’re not going to be glad. We want a decent life too.

“It will take a global effort by the working class. Everyone in every country should go out on strike for one day all over the world and everything would collapse. They would realize it is the workers who are making them rich.”

Tiffany, a young Fiat Chrysler worker in Detroit, said, “I signed the petition and read about this. I was shocked. There were so many people willing to take a stand, striking and standing up.

“It’s incredible that 13 workers were given life sentences. They’re using the workers as scapegoats. There is no proof that they killed anyone. It’s not surprising that the US government backs the Indian government because they want to do the same thing to us here.

“The jailed workers are hopeful and not giving up. That says a lot about their character. They were sentenced to life for standing up. If the Indian government thinks nobody knows about this case, then they will try to get away with it. We have to share their story. I didn’t have any idea about it until I read it in the *World Socialist Web Site*. We have to bring awareness of this case to other workers.

“American autoworkers should stand with them. That could just as easily be us. They’re there and we are here, but there’s no difference. Their struggle is our struggle. They all stood up, they did not waver and they fought for what they believed in.

“American workers can learn a lot from them. We take a stance for a while, like when we rejected the contract in 2015, but when we get threatened and things taken away, we give in. The workers in India are not doing that. That’s the kind of conviction we need. We need to stand up like them. You have to fight to the bitter end. The governments and the unions count on wearing you down, but they are not wearing down the Indian workers.

“I read that a temporary worker makes \$214 a month, half of what a full-time worker makes. That is horrible. They are billion-dollar corporations, and they don’t give us what we deserve—and we’re not supposed to stand up for our rights?”

Sue, a worker at the General Motors assembly plant in Ingersoll, Ontario, also spoke in support of the Maruti Suzuki workers. The Ingersoll factory was opened in 1989 as a joint venture between Suzuki and GM. Located southwest of Toronto, it was originally operated under the name Canadian Automotive Manufacturing, Inc. (CAMI). GM took full control of the plant in 2009 when Suzuki withdrew, and it expanded the plant in 2016 after it received a half a billion dollars in government tax breaks and other incentives.

“It’s my pleasure to speak up against the corporation. Suzuki used to have joint ownership of this plant with GM. We read the article about the Maruti Suzuki workers and sent the link to some friends in our industry who had also

seen it shared on social media. We plan to print it and distribute it around the plant.

“Just this week GM unjustly fired some of the temporary part-time workers [TPTs]. Our management team has made standardized work impossible, yet they discipline and/or terminate workers based on their [managerial] failures.

“It is a sad reality when workers are attacked by the corporation, our own unions and the media as lazy, greedy autoworkers. The laborers’ ethics and morals are the focus of questioning and scrutiny while they turn a blind eye toward the blatantly unethical, and immoral operations by these same corporations in other countries where they exploit workers.”

Bruce, a retired autoworker at the General Motor Delta Township plant near Lansing, Michigan said, “We should be outraged by what is happening in India. We have the same interests as these workers.

“The courts are following the corporate line in the face of little evidence. I can’t believe they wanted the death sentence. They want to go ahead and apply this case as a rubber stamp around the world.

“There has to be some sort of discrimination going on. The judge even admitted they were having problems with the evidence. It reminds me a little of the situation in Flint in 1937 when they brought in the National Guard. They set up machine guns on top of the hill and goons were trying to intimidate workers.

“You won’t see anything about this case on any American media outside of the *World Socialist Web Site*. The American worker has been told forever that we don’t have classes, that there is upward mobility. It takes a realization that we have the same interests as workers in Japan, in Korea and everywhere.”



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