

German auto workers oppose Maruti Suzuki frame-up

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In front of the Daimler plant in Stuttgart-Untertürkheim, many workers readily supported the campaign launched by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) on behalf of 31 workers victimised by the Indian carmaker Maruti Suzuki. Many Daimler workers agreed to sign the online petition demanding the release of their colleagues in India.

In a travesty of justice a court has condemned thirteen Maruti Suzuki workers in Manesar, in the northern Indian state of Haryana, to life imprisonment for “homicide”. Another eighteen workers have been sentenced to long jail sentences for minor offences. The ICFI has rejected this legal conspiracy in a statement and called for the defence of the Maruti Suzuki workers.

On March 29, WSWs reporters distributed this statement as a handout in front of the Daimler plant. It reads: “The ICFI is launching an international defense campaign aimed at mobilizing the industrial and independent political strength of the working class in India, South Asia and around the world to defeat the company-state vendetta against the Maruti Suzuki workers. The international working class must take up the fight for the immediate release of all of the framed-up workers, the vacating of all guilty verdicts, and the reinstatement of all the workers purged in 2012.”

More than 250 handouts were distributed to workers, whose shift started at six in the morning. When they heard about the way that the prosecutions had been rigged practically everyone took a handout and declared their support for the campaign. Many agreed that the management of Maruti Suzuki and the Indian government were mercilessly persecuting the workers because they had opposed rock bottom wages, short term, no condition contracts and dreadful working

conditions. Some Daimler workers thought the same kinds of methods could be employed when a similar struggle develops in Germany.

Following the end of the shift at 14:00, a number of workers stopped to talk with WSWs reporters. They said they agreed with the content of the statement, and promised to sign the online petition. It was important, some said, that workers in Germany condemn the devastating conditions of work and living conditions in India: “After all, we are all workers and have the same interests.”

Roland said, “These workers have obviously been wrongly condemned. I can clearly imagine the working conditions in India and I think management deliberately punished them so heavily in order to make an example of them. I support this campaign. They must all be released. I have been working here for thirty years now, and I often come into conflict with my superiors. Workers here in this factory have been harassed because they have allegedly caused problems. I am not saying conditions are comparable to India, but management is stepping up the pressure every day.”

Another worker, Sinisa said, “I cannot imagine that the hundreds of workers who were accused had really committed crimes. In my opinion, they probably rebelled against the management and demanded better working conditions. But they must have the right to fight for their demands. I think your campaign is good because you have started to tell the truth. No one knows what will happen to their jobs in the future. Management just spreads lies and there is growing unrest in the workforce.”

Bassam, remarked, “I have heard that these workers have been condemned without any real evidence, and it seems to me like the actions of a dictatorship. Of course, I must express my solidarity. I will read this

leaflet carefully and sign your petition. At Daimler the working conditions are not as good as many people think. I have been working here for thirty years. The area in which I work is due to be demobilised. Nobody knows what they plan for the 400 workers affected. There are rumours that some are to be transferred to other departments, while others will be sacked with any remuneration.

“I am in the union but I do not think they are doing a good job. They do nothing for the workers, but just impose the policies of the company executive. Really, for us, we only get the bad end of the stick.”

Frank also said he supported the fight to free the Maruti Suzuki workers. “I recently saw a documentary film dealing with the treatment of workers in multinational corporations in Asia. In Pakistan workers earn two Euros a day in a shoe factory. It is quite correct for workers to fight against such conditions. Low-wage labor means that human dignity is disregarded from the outset.

“I have not yet read your leaflet, but from what you are saying, I gather that the condemned workers have been singled out. The bosses are prepared to go to all lengths to increase their profits. I support the petition to demand the release of these workers.

“I work for a subcontractor in maintenance and production. All in all I’ve been with Daimler for almost thirty years, with an interruption of two or three years. In the past twenty years I have experienced major changes that have had a negative impact on workers. We are under constant pressure. In the old days kings and princes used such methods, today it is the company management.”

Halim, who has worked at Daimler for 10 years, said, “This is a disgrace. I support your campaign. Workers must also support the campaign. I think they are being sent to jail to deter others. The families of the condemned workers are suffering, and other workers see this happening. It puts pressure on them to accept everything management wants. Those with money and power can do what they want. That has to stop.

“I was transferred to this factory last year. The department where I worked for nine years was disbanded and I was offered work here. If I rejected the offer I would have been out of a job. Although the work here is hard, I have not received a pay rise.”



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