

# Indian railway and transport workers denounce Maruti Suzuki frame-up

Our correspondents  
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Indian Railways and public transport workers have endorsed the campaign by the International Committee of the Fourth International (ICFI) for the release of the 13 Maruti Suzuki workers who have been sentenced to life in prison on trumped-up murder charges. The campaign has exposed the legal conspiracy against workers at the Maruti Suzuki factory, located in Haryana state's Manesar-Gurgaon industrial belt.

WSWS reporters spoke with workers at the ICF (Integral Coach Factory) in Chennai, which is owned by Indian Railways, and other transport workers during the past week.

**Ravi**, 52, an ICF furnishing division worker, commented: "This verdict is wrong and the judge has no business issuing a warning to the Maruti Suzuki workers. The court should not be stating that investors will not come to the country if workers conduct struggles and it is wrong for it to be sentencing workers to life without a shred of evidence."

Commenting on the role played by the trade unions affiliated to India's Stalinist parties—the Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPM) and the Communist Party of India (CPI)—Ravi said: "It is condemnable that unions like the CITU and the AITUC have failed to denounce this punishment. They didn't even bother explaining to workers the verdict against the 13 victimised Maruti Suzuki workers and have refused to take any action to defend them."

**Kesavan**, 55, from the ICF's shell division said: "I had heard about the Maruti Suzuki workers' struggle and knew that a manager was killed during a struggle of workers at the company. But I didn't know about the verdict. This verdict should be denounced. It's a big mistake that the CPM and the CPI, who claim to be the parties of the working class, are silent on this."

Kesavan explained that the government was

outsourcing ICF work to private sweatshops and had implemented a contract labour system. "We oppose moves to privatise the ICF. The administration is aggressively carrying on with this process, despite the opposition of workers. They have introduced the cheap labour contract system to reach their production targets, and in order to speed up privatisation, they are also outsourcing the work. As a result, thousands of educated youth and those who have completed apprenticeships remain unemployed. The central government is not concerned about the plight of unemployed."

**Nadesan**, another ICF worker, expressed his support for the ICFI's campaign. "The courts," he said, "toe the line of the government and it was on this basis that they punished the Maruti Suzuki workers."

Referring to role of the unions and political parties, he said: "The trade unions once fought for the workers but now they do whatever the capitalists tell them to do. Had the trade unions fought against privatisation [at ICF] it could have been stopped but they didn't do it. Obtaining a pension—even for central and state government workers—is becoming increasingly difficult."

**Srinivasan**, 42, a public transport conductor, said: "I support this international campaign. The verdict, which sentences 13 workers to life imprisonment, is against the entire working class."

Srinivasan voiced his disgust with the trade unions: "There are 150,000 transport workers but we are treated like outsiders within the union. There is no right to freedom of speech within the union. The unions only serve the ruling party."

**Kulanthaivel**, 44, another conductor, expressed his dismay that the unions had been silent about the Maruti Suzuki frame-up: "I strongly condemn the punishment

that has been meted out to these workers who were waging a legitimate struggle.”

The unions at his factory, he explained, had made no protest about this anti-working class attack and not even informed workers about their brutal punishment. “I only learnt about this attack from you. I support your international defence campaign and believe that it is only through this sort of campaign that the 13 jailed workers can be defended.”

Commenting on his own working conditions, Kulanthaivel said: “The government claims that public transport runs at a loss and on that basis it refuses to provide us with wage increases, a pension scheme and a settlement package.”

**Ravichandran**, 50, said “The judges were wrong to deliver such a verdict against the Maruti Suzuki workers and I condemn it. By not protesting against this verdict, the political parties and the unions have made clear they are enemies of the working class. Transport workers and I are happy to see the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* conducting an international campaign to defend the Maruti Suzuki workers. Workers need such a party and publication.”

Outlining the deteriorating conditions of public transport workers, Ravichandran said: “We are public sector workers in name only. We face difficult conditions and work like daily labourers. Workers recruited since 2003 are not even entitled to a pension scheme.

“There are talks about the privatisation of public transport but due to opposition from the workers this move has dragged on. I believe the rights and interests of workers can be defended only through an international movement of the working class. I support your international movement.”

**Selvaraj**, 29, a three-wheeler driver, said: “The jailed Maruti Suzuki workers and their families have suffered for nearly five years and now the families of the 13 workers sentenced to life in prison will be thrown on the streets. There is no one to defend these workers. I support your international campaign.”

Selvaraj explained the situation facing three-wheeler drivers: “I don’t even have a mobile [phone]. In order to live I have to work every day and if anyone in our family falls sick we can’t go to private hospitals. Our children go to public schools that are generally not up

to the standard.”



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