Protest marks six years since frame-up of Maruti Suzuki workers began

Our correspondent
23 July 2018

More than a thousand workers marched to a Haryana state government office in Gurgaon on Wednesday, July 18 to protest the imprisonment for life on frame-up murder charges of thirteen Maruti Suzuki autoworkers.

The demonstration marked six years since the July 18, 2012 company-provoked altercation and fire at Maruti Suzuki's Manesar, Haryana car assembly that was used by the automaker, the police, and the Congress Party state government to mount a legal vendetta against the Maruti Suzuki workers that continues to this day.

The Haryana state government, now led by Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has petitioned the courts to set aside the life-sentences and instead order the thirteen workers to be hanged. It is also appealing the court's exoneration of 117 other workers who defence lawyers demonstrated had been victims of police malfeasance, including as a result of police collusion with the company and the outright fabrication of evidence. Not a single prosecution witness could identify the exonerated workers.

In the aftermath of the unexplained July 18, 2012 events, Maruti Suzuki purged the workforce of its Manesar plant, sacking and replacing 2,400 employees.

India's elite are determined to inflict exemplary punishment on the Maruti Suzuki workers, because in 2011-12 the Manesar plant emerged as a focal point for militant opposition to poverty wages, sweatshop conditions, and precarious contract-labour jobs across the Gurgaon-Manesar industrial belt.

Twelve of the 13 workers condemned to spend the rest of their lives in the living hell that is an Indian prison were leaders of the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union (MSWU), which workers had founded in bitter struggle against a government-accredited, company-supported stooge union.

Workers from all four Maruti Suzuki plants in the Gurgaon-Manesar area joined last Wednesday's demonstration, as did workers from more than two dozen other plants, including facilities owned by Honda, and the auto-parts manufacturers Rico and Bellsonica.

A representative of the Provisional Committee of the MSWU, which has assumed leadership of the union pending its leaders' release, addressed the demonstrators and explained that the events of July 18, 2012 were the result of a "staged management conspiracy."

There were also speakers from local unions, including from the Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), which is affiliated with the Stalinist Communist Party of India Marxist or CPM, and the All India Trades Union Congress, which is allied with the CPM's sister party, the Stalinist Communist Party of India.

The Stalinist leaders professed support for the Maruti Suzuki workers and appealed to the BJP government, which they routinely denounce for mounting an unprecedented assault on the working class, to call a "high level" judicial inquiry into the July 18 events and the legal persecution of the Maruti Suzuki workers.

The reality is that the Stalinist leaders have systematically isolated the Maruti Suzuki workers, leaving them to fight the state frame-up alone. This has included imposing a virtual blackout on their case. For weeks, the CPM's English-language weekly failed to so much as mention the March 2017 frame-up convictions of the Maruti Suzuki workers. When the CPM held its national congress in April, it made no mention of the fight to free the Maruti Suzuki workers, although it is well-known that employers routinely threaten workers that they will "do a Maruti Suzuki," i.e., conspire with the police and politicians to fire and

© World Socialist Web Site

frame them up.

If on occasion the local Stalinist trade union leaders feign support by joining a protest marking the July 18 anniversary or the date of the workers' frame-up convictions, it is because they are aware that there is enormous sympathy for the victimized and jailed workers in Gurgaon-Manesar and across India.

The Stalinists fear the militant example of the Maruti Suzuki workers. Above all they recognize that any campaign to mobilize the working class in their defence would cut across their attempts to forge a political alliance with the big business Congress Party for the 2019 national elections and to promote the courts and other state institutions as "democratic bulwarks" against the Hindu supremacist BJP.

The International Committee of the Fourth International and the *World Socialist Web Site* have emphasized the urgent need for workers all over the world to rally to the defence of the Maruti Suzuki workers and fight for their immediate release.

In challenging the Japanese automaker's brutal work regime and poverty wages, the Maruti Suzuki workers were striking a blow for the international working class. The campaign for their release can and must be a vital first step in forging the world unity of the working class that is needed to combat the transnationals and defeat their attempts to drive down wages and working condition by pitting workers against each other in a never-ending race to the bottom.

The authors also recommend:

A travesty of justice that must not stand!
One year since India's courts condemned framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers to jail for life
[17 March 2018]

Free the framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers!
[20 March 2017]

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site