

Educators in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Ohio support the struggle of Maruti Suzuki workers

Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee
22 June 2021

The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee is comprised of educators in Pennsylvania, Maryland and Ohio and meets every Thursday at 7:30 p.m. We invite educators, students and parents throughout the region to sign up to join our committee and attend our next meeting.

Last Thursday, our committee discussed the tragic death of Indian Maruti Suzuki worker Jiyalal, who died under the watch of Indian police. We reviewed the history of the frame-up and imprisonment of the Maruti Suzuki workers for their struggle to organize resistance to the brutal conditions of exploitation. The following resolution was unanimously adopted.

The Pennsylvania Educators Rank-and-File Safety Committee condemns and mourns the death of Indian Maruti Suzuki worker Jiyalal, under the watch of Indian police. We also mourn the death of Maruti Suzuki worker Pawan Dahiya, who died from electrocution at his farm, and pledge our support to the struggle to free the remaining 11 framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers.

Jiyalal, who was diagnosed with skeletal cancer, was denied medical treatment and left to die, for a crime he did not commit. He was just 35 years old. He and his family were hounded by the police during his final excruciating year at home, with threats of returning him to prison, which culminated in the tragic death of his father.

He was one of 13 Maruti Suzuki workers, who led a militant struggle to break free of the control of their company-run union and founded their own, leading a fight in 2012 to end the horrendous sweatshop conditions that he and thousands of his co-workers were forced to endure.

In response to this struggle, which was poised to spread to workplaces across the region, management framed the workers for a fire of unknown origin in the factory, which caused the death of a Human Resources representative.

Without any proof against the workers, the company, the courts, the unions, the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the state Congress party vindictively colluded to convict the workers of murder and sentenced them to life in prison. The company provided lists of workers to the police for arrest, testimony by workers was excluded, and the burden of proof was placed on the workers in a violation of the most basic of democratic rights.

Jiyalal was savagely beaten during his first arrest and was held, along with the other Maruti Suzuki workers, in horrific conditions in prison.

His death is the second among the 13 Maruti Suzuki frame up-victims. In February 2021, 37-year-old Pawan Dahiya died on his farm after getting electrocuted from an apparently faulty submersible well pump. Pawan was home on parole from prison during the brief temporary release of Maruti Suzuki workers due to the rapid spread of COVID-19 in India. Ajmer Singh, who was a legal advisor of the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union (MSWU) prior to his incarceration, is battling cancer. All are victims of ruling class justice.

Now the state government in India is asking the prisoners to return to their cells, claiming that the pandemic is under control, when the daily new infections has consistently been over 25,000 this past week.

The conviction of the Maruti Suzuki 13 and the deaths of Jiyalal and Pawan are a warning to the working class across the globe. The capitalist class and the states it controls will take any action to protect their profit interests and oppose efforts by the working class to improve their living and working conditions.

Most significantly, it is a lesson on the necessity for the broadest organization and mobilization of the working class in a militant movement independent of the corrupt union bureaucracies.

It was the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), which the Maruti Suzuki workers were members of, that worked to shut down strike action by the workers and to prevent the mobilization of hundreds of thousands of workers in the region to defend the Maruti Suzuki workers.

At every turning point, when tens of thousands of workers were ready to take action in support of the Maruti Suzuki workers, the AITUC intervened to shut down labor action, promoting the lie that the state government would intervene on the behalf of the workers.

This isolation left the Maruti Suzuki workers to fight an international corporation, the police, and the state government all on their own, resulting in the defeat of the union, the layoff of all 2,400 workers and the police persecution of hundreds of strike participants.

This defeat must inform workers around the world, including here in Pennsylvania and around the United States, that the greatest ally and weapon the working class has is itself. It is only the mass mobilization of the working class in struggle and in solidarity which will bring about improvements in living and working conditions, as well as protect workers from persecution by the companies and the courts.

We strongly condemn the company, the courts, the BJP and state Congress party and the AITUC for their complicity in the death of Jiyalal and the persecution of his fellow workers, whose only crime was fighting to improve their livelihoods. We encourage all educators and workers around the world to join the movement to build the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which will build the militant labor movement workers need in opposition to the corrupt trade unions that have abandoned us.



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