

UK: Strikers at Fujitsu support release of framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers

By our reporters
29 March 2017

This week, striking workers employed at the Manchester site of information technology conglomerate Fujitsu expressed solidarity with the campaign to release 13 framed-up Maruti Suzuki autoworkers in India. Earlier this month, the workers were sentenced to life imprisonment.

Fujitsu workers in Britain took strike action at sites across the UK last Friday and on Monday this week in opposition to plans by the firm to carry out up to 1,800 redundancies, pension cuts, and to demand a living wage.

The Manchester site of Fujitsu—situated on Northampton Road in the Newton Heath district of the city—employs more than 600 workers.

On the Monday, Socialist Equality Party members spoke to about 15 strikers on the picket line in Manchester and distributed copies of the statement by the International Committee of the Fourth International, “Free the framed-up Maruti Suzuki workers!” The statement denounces the life sentences imposed on 13 Maruti Suzuki workers, and the three-to-five years’ imprisonment of another 18 employees handed down by an Indian court on March 18. It calls on workers internationally to sign an online petition to the Indian government demanding the release of all the Maruti Suzuki workers.

SEP member Dennis Moore then read out a statement to the pickets, who listened attentively to his remarks. Moore said, “The SEP and our news site, the *World Socialist Web Site*, brings you greetings this morning. We have been reporting on this dispute. We support your struggle to defend jobs, pension rights and your fight for better rates of pay.

“Today you are taking this action as many workers across the world are facing ever increasing attacks on their conditions at work.

“Throughout the world workers are being expected to work harder for the same or less pay, often with their conditions at work increasingly becoming more difficult.”

Moore continued, “In light of this I wish to draw your attention as a matter of urgency to the plight of 13 fellow workers at an auto plant in Delhi, India.

“These workers have been framed up by the Indian state for taking action in defence of their conditions at work, and now face life sentences in prison for fundamentally defending their right to strike and take action.

“In 2012, at the time of the dispute, an altercation occurred at the plant. A fire occurred at the plant, that led to the death of Awanish Kumar Dev, part of the human resources team.

“Following this the workers were framed up by the judiciary and the police. At the time of the trial, the prosecution called for these workers to face the death sentence.

“This disgraceful sham took place with the complicity of the all the main political parties in India.”

Moore explained, “These workers had taken a series of actions, including protests, walkouts, sit down strikes, against intolerable sweatshop conditions at work—conditions that they could no longer put up with—and chose to do something about it.

“The thirteen Maruti Suzuki workers include twelve members of the executive of the Maruti Suzuki Workers Union (MSWU), with a further 18 workers being framed on lesser charges. The workers at the plant set up this union in opposition to the employers who had set up a stooge union, there only to push through whatever the bosses wanted.

“In the ensuing court case it was highlighted that the police had colluded with the management of the

Japanese-owned car maker, using evidence to bring about these convictions that had been fabricated. Not one piece of evidence has been brought forward that has linked the starting of the fire to any worker at the plant, yet alone any of the thirteen that have been convicted.”

Moore continued, “The message that is being sent out by the Indian state and political establishment is clear—there will be no resistance tolerated of any kind that affects the profits of these companies as they attempt to implement low wages, increased production, having to work under conditions that are not acceptable, to human beings in the 21st century.”

Moore concluded with an appeal: “I urge all those here today to please look at the leaflets we have handed out. We are calling on workers throughout the world to oppose this attack and support the campaign being mounted by the International Committee of the Fourth International.

“We call on all working people, youth and students throughout the world to fight for the freedom of these 13 workers.”

He called on the strikers to “sign our on line petition that can be found at the WSWS and, wherever possible, raise this matter with all those you come into contact with.”

“If you look throughout the world today, working people face an onslaught against their working conditions and living standards. As the multinationals and large corporations seek to increase their profits, this will only be carried out at the cost of workers like yourselves.

“This is being carried out with the full support of the political elite in the countries wherever the corporations choose to base their operations.

“At the same time as workers are being ravaged by pay cuts, speed ups and attacks on all aspects of their lives, vast amounts of money is being spent on wars.

“It is workers like you that face redundancy. It is you that take the pay cuts, it is you that have to work harder for less. Workers like you are being forced to come forward, and take action to defend your jobs and conditions at work.

“Yet success can only be brought about if workers join in struggles to defend each other, and this has to be based on a political programme that starts from the unity of the international working class. Please support

this campaign to free the Maruti Suzuki Workers.”

The pickets expressed their support for the campaign to release the Maruti Suzuki workers by applauding Moore.

Prior to Moore’s appeal, SEP members explained to workers that the SEP had political differences with the Unite trade union who called the strikes. In response one of the workers said, “Well, it’s a point of principle that we have to support these workers in India.” She asked, “Do you also want me to write to the Indian embassy about the case?”

After Moore’s appeal, one striker said, “We are all workers and we have to support those workers in India.”

Another said, “I support the Suzuki workers and I will look online and sign the petition.”

Another striker said, “I can see the need to support the workers in India.”

Another picket told Moore he supported the Indian workers saying, “I wasn’t sure I was going to turn up [to the picket line] today, but it’s been worth it after hearing what you have just said. I was very interested in what you said.”

To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>