

# Open Letter from The Nanhai District General Trade Union and Shishan Town General Trade Union to the Workers of Honda Motors Nanhai Component and Parts Factory

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The strike at the Honda Motors Nanhai Factory in Guangdong, China which began on May 17th has reached a temporary resolution. Talks with the company's General Manager Zeng Qinghong ended today with workers agreeing to resume work for three days while Honda discusses their demands. Two days ago (on May 31st) a group of around forty workers were assaulted by thugs claiming to be part of the local trade union. This created much indignation among workers who immediately demanded an apology and a thorough investigation. In response, the Nanhai District and Shishan Town General Trade Unions sent an open letter of "apology" to the workers on the following day of June 1st. Below is the English translation of the letter.

While production has temporarily resumed, there is no guarantee that management will agree to the workers demands which include (1) an 800 rmb pay increase to permanent employees, (2) an agreement that year-end bonuses cannot be slashed, (3) more and better training programs for employees, (4) an apology and investigation into the May 31st assault, and (4) a restructuring of the factory's union based on worker elected representation. Management's previous four offers were all rejected by the workers. The local branches of the All China Federation of Trade Unions (ACFTU) have played only a "neutral" mediating role in the ongoing strike. The strike seems to have been initially executed by a small group of Hunanese workers who walked off the job on May 17th causing others to follow. Because the Nanhai factory is a "component and parts" factory, the stopping of production quickly caused three other assembly plants in Guangdong and Wuhan to come to an abrupt halt.

On June 1st at 5:00pm, the Shishan Village Trade Union sent an open apology to the employees of Honda and hung copies up in each administrative office of the Honda Motors Nanhai factory. This letter was given to the Caixin news agency and published by them here.

Respected Honda Employees:

Yesterday the trade union participated in mediation talks between the workers and management of Honda. Because a portion of Honda employees have refused to return to work, factory production has been severely curtailed. In the process of discussions with forty or so employees, at one point there occurred some misunderstandings and verbal imprudence from both sides. Due to the impulsive emotional state of some of the employees, a physical conflict ensued between some employees and representatives from the union. This incident has left a negative impression on employees. A portion of these employees, after receiving word of the incident, seem to have misinterpreted the actions of the union as siding with management. Yesterday's incident came entirely as a shock to us. If people feel that some of the methods used in yesterday's incident were a bit difficult to accept, we apologize.

In regard to the above incident, the union would like to again state its position. Yesterday, the vast majority of employees returned to their positions. However, the behavior of the above mentioned group of forty or so workers has already damaged the interests of the majority of employees. In addition, such behavior harms factory production. The fact that the union has stood up and admonished these workers is entirely in the interests of the majority of employees. This is the responsibility of the union! All workers please carefully consider this.

From the 17th of May up until the last ten days or so, the union had actively participated in mediation talks between workers and management. The union also dispatched its work teams, adopted various methods of listening to both side's opinions, and used all its effort to fight for the interests of the workers. This includes the May 26th announcement by management of a wage increase. This wage increase plan clearly stated that if workers returned to work on May 27th, official workers would receive a wage and subsidy increase of 355 rmb, and company interns would receive an increase of 477 rmb. After this, the union again put forth strenuous efforts to convince management on May 31st to further increase this to 366 rmb and 488 rmb respectively. In addition, the union fought to get management to agree that if employees returned to work, management would within two months continue talks with employees regarding improvement of working conditions; and with a promise of returning to work according to schedule, management would not punish employees who participated in the strike and would fully reimburse employees for pay losses suffered during the strike. Our union is sincerely trying to help to get this problem resolved!

We feel that talks between workers and management should be based on the preconditions of "mutual trust, mutual understanding, and mutual support." Both sides must enact real compromises in order to hastily come to a consensus. We hope that workers will continue to calmly approach the issue of a wage increase, get rid of outside negative interferences, and calmly follow the news coming from the internet and other media outlets. In addition, it would be best if employees would select communication representatives, and under the support of and in coordination with union higher-ups, enter into discussions with management in order to resolve this problem according to law. It would be unwise for workers to behave in ways that go against the interests of themselves and others because of impulsive emotions. Some employees are worried that representatives who are willing to stand up and enter into talks with management would later receive the reprisals of management. This is a misunderstanding. According to the respective laws and regulations, the right for workers to enter into discussions with management is protected. If management were to "retaliate" they would surely be punished according to law. As union higher-ups we would rigorously investigate management for any wrong doing. Please trust the union. Trust each level of party officials and government. We will definitely uphold justice.

Lastly, we wish everybody good health and pleasant work.

Nanhai District General Trade Union

Shishan Town General Trade Union

June 1st, 2010

<http://chinastudygroup.net/2010/06/translation-of-an-open-letter-from-the-nanhai-district-general-trade-union-and-shishan-town-general-trade-union-to-the-workers-of-honda-motors-nanhai-component-and-parts-factory/>