

Support Honda Workers in Foshan China

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To all those who are concerned with workers in China:

On May 17, 2010, more than 1800 Honda workers in Foshan decided to go on strike. By May 27, all four Honda plants in China had stopped production.

Why did the workers go on strike? It is because their wages are too low and their conditions are harsh! Formal workers at Honda in Foshan take home 1200 yuan (US\$175) a month on average, while intern workers, 80% of its workforce, earn as little as 900 yuan (US\$131) a month. Intern workers are students from technical schools who are not protected by the national Labor Contract Law, because they work for Honda under an internship contract. They are given a wage below the local minimum and are not covered by social insurance. What can Honda workers do with the little wages they get, at a time where prices for everyday goods are getting more and more expensive? They have little left, apart from covering their basic necessities. Can they hope to take root in the city? No. Can they work with dignity? No. They cannot afford housing, medical care, child rearing, or to look after their parents. With high inflation, it is difficult for them to take care of their own livelihood.

With all these difficulties, they have reported their situation to management through internal channels, but have been ignored. Their report disappears like a stone in the sea. Thus they are forced to go on strike. They demand a pay raise to 2000-2500 yuan. This is a very reasonable demand, as this was only about the average wage level in Foshan three years ago.

During the strike, they hoped that the company would take their views seriously and alleviate their current difficulties. But what did they get as a response? They met with threats and ridicule and a plot to divide the workers. The company said they would respond in a week. What did the company do in the meantime? The company threatened them: whoever does not return to work will be fired. The company picked out the strike leaders and fired them. The company also threatened all intern workers that if they did not return to work, they will not get their diploma for graduation. This is what Honda did in the interim. On May 24, the company responded that they will provide 55 yuan food subsidy to each worker. What a mockery they made of workers' demand! Workers are not beggars! Facing Honda's response, which clearly lacked sincerity, workers were angry and decided to continue their strike.

On May 26, Honda rolled out a proposal to divide the workers: 477 yuan raise for intern workers and 355 yuan raise for formal workers. They hoped to tempt intern workers to return to work and thus "divide and rule."

What surprised Honda is the unity demonstrated by workers. On May 27, workers counter-proposed 800 yuan raise for all, with no discrimination. Yet Honda did not learn its lesson, but

played the “divide and rule” game again: 634 yuan for intern workers after three months and 355 yuan for formal workers. At the same time, Honda exerted more pressure on intern workers and required them to sign a “no strike” commitment before 9 am, May 31. The company also brought local officials and teachers of technical schools to force intern workers to return to work before May 31. Honda had promised that they would address the problem with a positive attitude. Look at what happened. This is what Honda called a positive attitude.

Struggling for survival and for dignity, Honda workers are forced to go on strike. But Honda had no sincere intention to solve the problems; it continuously tried to divide the workers and mobilized others to exert pressure on them. At present, workers have agreed to return to work for three days and allow the management time (before Friday) to respond to their demands. Now is the critical time for the workers’ struggle. Therefore, we appeal to all Honda workers, all worker brothers and sisters, people in China who are concerned with workers, and people in the world who are concerned with workers, to support the struggles of Honda workers in Foshan!

It is because their struggles are reasonable and just. They resist the oppression of their exploiters and they fight for a dignified life for all workers.

Let us unite and exert pressure on Honda. We want to tell Honda: stop all your efforts to divide and suppress workers and meet workers’ demands.

We most sincerely salute the courageous Honda workers!

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The translator is not sure how to Romanize names of many signers from Taiwan. Not wanting to make mistakes in rendering their names, the translator apologize for not including them here. Please check the Chinese version for a fuller list of the signers.

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