

Urgent Action

# **Tension Escalates at Pearl Continental Karachi as Workers Contest New Management Brutality**

Thursday 18 March 2010, by [IUF](#) (Date first published: 17 March 2010).

**Tension is building to a crisis point at the notorious Pearl Continental Hotel in Karachi, Pakistan, as 4 elected union leaders continue to resist their illegal dismissal on February 24 by refusing to leave the hotel and union members and supporters maintain a vigil outside.**

The sit-in and supporters' camp outside the luxury establishment have been continuously maintained for three weeks following the dismissal of four officers including the union President, Vice-President and Vice-Chairman. The dismissed leaders and the growing number of supporters outside have vowed not to move until the illegal dismissals are withdrawn and the hotel management agrees to negotiate issues unresolved at the hotel since 2002, including previous sackings of other union officers and members.

For eight years management has been brutally and systematically seeking to destroy the Pearl Continental Karachi Union through anti-union dismissals, intimidation, violence and false imprisonment (background). In 2002, three union leaders were illegally jailed for months while management and the police conspired to link them to various alleged criminal acts. In 2009, after 7 years of vilification and false accusations, their cases were thrown out of the courts in a decision which declared that "Doubt prevails in every nook and cranny of this case."

In 2003, the Committee on Freedom of Association of the ILO determined that grave violations of union rights had been committed by the hotel management and local authorities and instructed the government to fully investigate the incidents of police detention, violence and harassment of union members.

Neither the hotel management nor the government of Pakistan has responded to this decision. Eight years on the union continues to struggle for legal recognition of its rights. Because the union's demands have been pending before the labour court and the labour department since 2002, no union officer can be legally terminated without the authorization of the labour court.

The February 24 dismissals triggered a response born of 8 years of frustration, with the dismissed officers refusing to leave the hotel until they were reinstated and supporters including family members, fraternal unions, social and human rights activists showing continuous support outside. On March 1, police assaulted the supporters outside the hotel, including women and children, holding them in detention. They were released following a protest action outside the prison - and returned to the supporters' camp.

Management is pressing for new police action through the use of warrants and new court orders,

but the depth of support for the Pearl Continental workers has left the police hesitant - for now - to forcibly remove the officers inside or assault the supporters outside the hotel.

The IUF Pakistan office has mobilized wide support to press for restraint by the police and civil authorities and to resolve the conflict through negotiations. International pressure is urgently needed. Please write the hotel management and the parent company to tell them to withdraw the latest dismissals and to begin negotiations to resolve all outstanding issues.

Eight years of assaulting and repressing union members and officers, censure by the United Nations' ILO and continuous human rights violations is enough!

[*Picture: Pearl Continental Hotel Workers' Solidarity Committee rallies supporters outside the hotel: "The struggle will continue until the workers are reinstated and the union recognized!"*]

CLICK HERE to send a message to the hotel management and to the parent company:

[http://www.iuf.org/cgi-bin/campaigns/show\\_campaign.cgi?c=498](http://www.iuf.org/cgi-bin/campaigns/show_campaign.cgi?c=498)

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**P.S.**

\* From IUF website ([www.iuf.org](http://www.iuf.org)):

<http://cms.iuf.org/?q=node/293>