

Dear Comrades,

We see a ray of hope after four months of sustained struggle by workers of Unitex Exports. The employer, Mr. Radhakrishnan was finally forced to sit face to face with the Garment and Fashion Workers' Union and respond to the dispute and demands the union raised. The pressure on the employer and government came from various quarters, in particular from trade union solidarity across the world.

The dialogue and preliminary agreement between the management and union has been arrived at in the presence of all authorities the union was agitating against. On Monday 27th February, the Assistant Commissioner of Labour(ACL) and Radhakrishnana were summoned to Sub-Collector's Office and were given virtually no alternative. GAFWU is also party to an agreement with the management with the ACL as signatory. Therefore, this agreement is enforceable under law, and failure to do so will attract immediate intervention of the District administration.

We also gave the local district authorities a clear message and that was -GAFWU was prepared for a protracted dharna outside the new factory, Unitex International, Sevapet. We believe this agreement could be achieved because of the fight the Unitex membership gave and the enormous pressure that local and international solidarity brought on our government.

.The *preliminary (basic and binding) agreement* signed between the union and management, before the Assistant Commissioner of Labour and the Sub-Collector of Thiruvallur, states *the settlement between management and workers in no way infringes on their right to rejoin work at the new company Unitex International*, and that management has agreed to pay

1. gratuity for all workers including those below 5 years of service
2. Wage compensation for the period of lay-off from November 2011, on the basis of 15 days wage for every month.
3. Statutory payments, such as earned leave, arrears of annual bonus, etc. have been agreed to.
4. The payment will be made on 15.3.2012 at the Thriuvallur Labour Office to all workers, by bank draft or government pay order in the presence of the union.
5. The union will hold further discussions and work on the specifics of the settlement of each worker.

We are holding a meeting of all Unitex workers on March 2, 2012 at the head office in Kilpauk, Chennai. The settlement will be discussed and will be put to vote if need be.

GAFWU is proud to have been able to receive support from activist groups in the clothing industry and militant trade unions. We were able to have a negotiated settlement without resorting to costly and lengthy legal battles. In the garment factories in the Greater Chennai region, tripartite dialogue is a rare or perhaps unheard of thing. Therefore, we sees this as a major move forward and gives recognition to GAFWU as a industry level union that is committed to building new form of struggle and empowerment among the garment factory workers.

Comrades, we will keep you updated, your support has helped us deal with an intractable issue that went on for four months and more.

Sincerely

Meghna Sukumar

Organising Secretary