



NACTWU



PRESS STATEMENT BY UNITED TEXTILE EMPLOYEES (UNITE), NATIONAL CLOTHING, TEXTILE & ALLIED WORKERS' UNION (NACTWU) and INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC UNION OF LESOTHO (IDUL)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

DATE: 1ST APRIL 2020

LESOTHO GOVERNMENT DELAYED DECISION ON WORKERS' PAYMENT DURING LOCK DOWN IS CAUSING UNTOLD SUFFERING ON TEXTILE AND GARMENT WORKERS

This press statement is to inform the public, press and our members over our concerns over the dragging of feet by the government to address the lack of a decision to pay workers during the 21 days lock down in Lesotho. We have been in and out of offices of the Department of Labour trying to address the matter amicably and the requested meeting seems not to be forthcoming.

The three (3) unions are among the organized trade unions in the garment and textile sector in Lesotho which employs over 45 000 workers in the country contributing massively to the GDP. Our members do not only contribute to the GDP but support numerous families, unemployed relatives and poverty stricken families with their wages.

The dragging of feet means the government is not interested in taking care of those who contribute most in making Lesotho prosper. This is in fact a spit on their faces of the workers.

Senior service workers, government ministers, parliamentarians and bosses of the textile and garment sector will receive their fat salaries during the 21 days lock down and subsequent lock-downs while our members are languishing in poverty in villages, urban and rural areas. The bosses and ministers live in nice houses and have stocked abundant foods for the lock down while workers are starving with their families.

The outbreak of the coronavirus is not our own making but lies with decision makers in society and employers who over the years failed to pay proper living wages salaries, build proper health structures and in order to boost that ill-gotten income.

The workers will bear the brunt of this pandemic. They have sacrificed their lives for the country with meagre wages and are continuing to keep the economy going as essential workers during this time. Even after the lock down given the bad state of health and safety situation in our textile and garment sectors where workers are exposed to harmful chemicals, breathe in dust day and night, work in hazardous conditions, etc. workers will continue bearing the brunt of the pandemic

This situation shows that workers are sacrificing their lives while employers and government refuse their justified demands to be paid during the lock down while government is prepared to listen sympathetically to employers call for a bail out.

We are also concerned by companies who are notorious for exploiting short term contracts for exploitation, bad conditions and low wages that they will use this period to get rid of this category of workers. We demand that an employment security for all not only those who are permanent.

We are therefore issuing a call to the Ministry of Labour, government, parliamentarians and employers to meet the following demands:

- 1) All workers who are at home observing the lock down must be paid their wages in full for the 21 days.**
- 2) Those essential workers who are required to work must be provided with free transport during this period by employers. Workers transport must be compliant with guidelines of social distancing.**
- 3) That employers must comply with the Department of Health and Department of Labour 's guidelines in terms of safe guarding workers during the lock down and after the lock down in terms of COVID-19 guidelines and eliminating existing workplace hazards that make workers vulnerable to the coronavirus**
- 4) That workers who are medically diagnosed for coronavirus must be paid full wages until they recover**
- 5) That workers whose children 'schools or day-centre are closed because of the coronavirus and who needs to take of those children must be paid full wages during that leave of absence until those centres are re-opened. The industry employs a lot of women hence the demand but we do not rule that male workers can also be released to take care of children.**
- 6) That those workers whose married partners test positive for the virus must be released on full pay to take care of their partners until they recover**
- 7) That those workers who advised by the doctors not to report to work because of underlying conditions must be paid full wages until the doctor advise them that they can go back to work. The underlying conditions are asthma, TB, diabetes, cancer, etc. who are mainly caused by bad conditions in the industry.**
- 8) That those workers who are care givers to relatives who had tested positive for the coronavirus and there is no care givers to assist, can be released on full pay until alternative arranged can be found to take of those relatives.**
- 9) Shopstewards, Health & Safety Committees and Peer Educators must be given more paid time off by employers to play a role of combating the coronavirus.**

We humbly request government and the captains of industry to heed and agree to our demands for the sake of building a better life for all in Lesotho.

Issued: General Secretaries of UNITE, IDUL and NACTWU

- 1) NATIONAL CLOTHING, TEXTILE & ALLIED WORKERS' UNION (NACTWU)**
Contact Person: General Secretary: Comrade Sam Mokhele – Mobile number: +266 63 12 12 12 and +266 596 77 595

- 2) INDEPENDENT DEMOCRATIC UNION OF LESOTHO (IDUL)**
Contact Person: Deputy General Secretary – Comrade May Ratlhakane: Mobile number: =+266 6602 0309

- 3) UNITED TEXTILE EMPLOYEES' (UNITE) – GENERAL SECRETARY: - COMRADE SOLONG + 266 5808 9166**