

Social Media Solidarity With Strikers Will Cost You Your Job, Honda Tells Workers

BY HINA FATHIMA ON 27/09/2016 • [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

As strike enters day nine, one worker has already been suspended for 'liking' a Facebook post.



Workers protesting against Honda Rajasthan management at Jantar Mantar. Credit: Hina Fathima

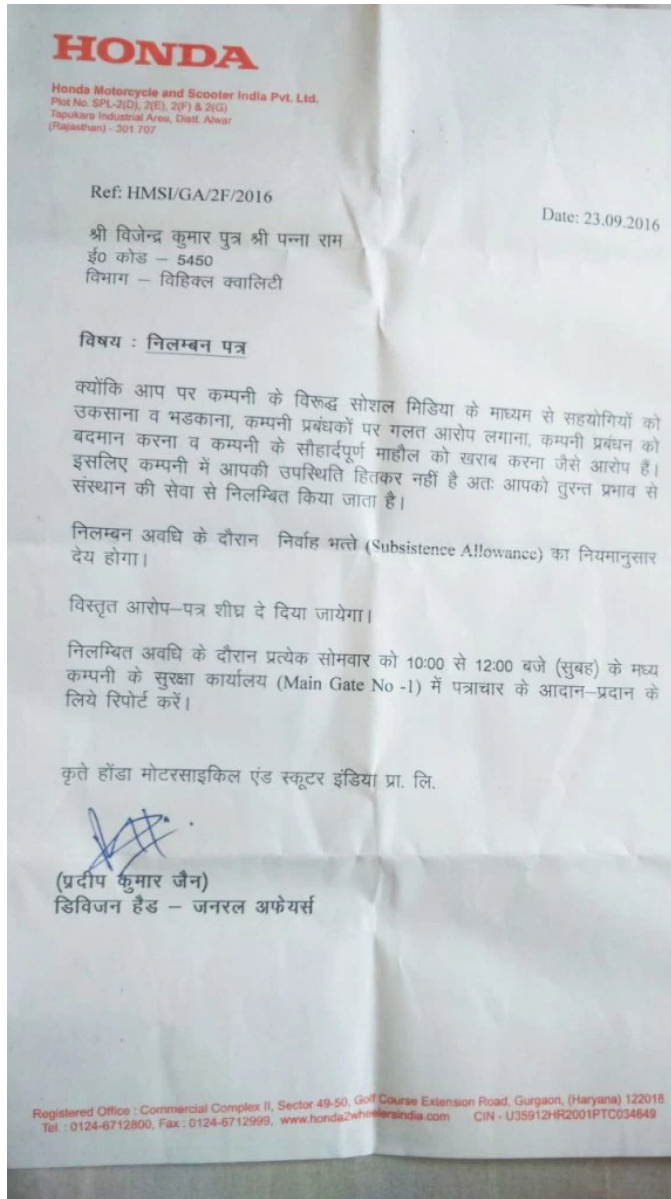
New Delhi: Rising concerns over the growing support for the hunger strike led by workers of Honda Motorcycle and Scooter India (HMSI) from Tapukara, Rajasthan, has led the management of the company to warn its current employees against using social media to support the workers' protest.



Hunger strike by Honda workers of the Tapukara, Rajasthan plant continues on day nine at Jantar Mantar.

Credit: Hina Fathima

Vijender Kumar, a permanent worker at the Tapukara plant who had 'liked' some photos of the protest posted on Facebook, was indefinitely suspended on September 24 by the management for expressing his support for the hunger strike. This tactic mirrors similar attempts made by political parties, the police and universities to crack down on free speech in various parts of the country.



Suspension letter given to Vijender Kumar at the Honda Tapukara plant. Credit: Special arrangement

Workers claim that Honda has also posted notifications at the plant and issued warning letters to take disciplinary action against employees who use social media to incite unrest or demonstrate solidarity with the nearly 2,500 workers whose employment has been terminated since February.

In the meantime, taking a respite from the late-summer heat, workers of HMSI – on their ninth day of an indefinite hunger strike (<http://thewire.in/68328/watch-honda-workers-are-on-an-indefinite-hunger-strike-at-jantar-mantar/>) – lay down to conserve their energy at Jantar Mantar.



Honda workers on their ninth day of fast take rest while laying down on the stage at Jantar Mantar. Credit: Hina Fathima

Since the strike began on September 19, each day, activists, students and workers have been participating in a relay hunger strike as well. On Tuesday, four workers from Maruti plants in Manesar and Gurgaon fasted in order to demonstrate their support for the Honda employees.

Honda workers came to Delhi to protest the mismanagement and exploitative working conditions of the contract labour at the Honda factory in Tapukara in Rajasthan.



Lunch being served at the community kitchen, an effort funded by workers, activists, unions, and students. Credit: Hina Fathima

Over 100 permanent workers and nearly 2,500 contract workers, who were terminated, are still waiting for the company to reinstate them.

Contract and permanent workers at the Tapukara plant came together to file a petition to unionise on August 6, 2015. A stay order has been issued against their union, while workers claim that the HMSI Karamchari Union

(<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/auto/news/two-wheelers/scooters-mopeds/labour-unrest-honda-denies-sacking-of-workers/articleshow/54508752.cms>), formed by a few workers in alliance with the Honda management, was approved within a month in May of this year. The HMSI Karamchari Union was created with the support of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, a group affiliated to the RSS.

Several workers, students and activists like Binayak Sen, documentary filmmaker Rahul Roy, trade union leaders like Amarjeet Kaur and Vidya Sagar Giri of All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Sanjay Singhvi of Trade Union Centre of India and Ram Nivas of Mazdoor Sahyog Kendra, were present over the past week to express their solidarity with the Honda workers.

Jignesh Mevani of the Una Dalit Atyachar Ladhai Samiti, also held a meeting with the workers over the weekend.

Vipin Paul – one of the five Honda workers on hunger strike – fell unconscious on the morning of September 26 and refused treatment when he was taken to the hospital.



Vipin Paul, being carried by his colleagues, after fainting from exhaustion and dehydration on the eighth day of his fast. Credit: Special arrangement

“What will happen to my friends protesting here if I break my fast?” he said.

Although there has been no response from the Honda management about reinstating the terminated workers or dropping charges against the accused, Paul says that he is hoping for a positive result in the coming days.



Vipin Paul returned to the site of the protest after being taken to the hospital when he fainted on September 26.
Credit: Hina Fathima

Over 100 employees also arrived in Delhi over the weekend to join a candlelight vigil held for Anil Jakhad, a terminated Honda employee who died in a bike accident in Haryana on September 18.



Poster of Anil Jakhad, a terminated Honda employee who died in a bike accident in Haryana on September 18.
A candlelight vigil was held for him over the weekend. Credit: Hina Fathima

Naresh Mehta, president of the Honda Motorcycle and Scooter 2F Kamgar Union, announced a boycott of all Honda products on the first day of the strike, which went into effect yesterday. Teams of workers and activists have been protesting against the purchase

of Honda products outside automobile dealerships, railway stations and bus stops across Delhi.

Rajpal, a terminated permanent employee, said that Honda's products have defects because of the employment of new contract workers who lack proper training.

Support continues to pour in for the strike. From Wednesday onwards, leaders of other automobile unions such as Maruti Manesar, Maruti Gurgaon, Suzuki Bikes and Munjal Showa, along with trade unions like AITUC, Centre of Indian Trade Unions and Indian National Trade Union Congress will participate in a four-day march from Dharuhera in Haryana to Jantar Mantar.



Poster of the 'March for Justice' being held from September 28-October 2 from Dharuhera, Haryana to New Delhi. Credit: Hina Fathima

The families of Honda workers will also arrive on October 2, after which they will continue to boycott Honda products in teams across the city.

Meanwhile, workers have appealed to labour minister Bandaru Dattatreya to resolve the issue. A Honda worker said the minister would forward their memorandum of demands to his officer on special duty for further inquiry into the matter.

Why Honda Workers Are on an Indefinite Hunger Strike at Jantar Mantar



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