



CHALLENGING indecent work @ Unilever

20 pages brief on workers' actions in India and Pakistan

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Members of the Hindustan Lever Employees Union demonstrate outside the Nerul Railway Station to raise public awareness of the campaign against the illegal closure of the Unilever factory in Sewri in Mumbai. Two years earlier 90% of the union's 902 members voted against financial compensation and demanded that the factory be re-opened. - 14 April 2007



Weekly protests at railways stations continued for 6 weeks. As one of the busiest railway networks in the world, there are more than a million passengers commuting on the Mumbai railways every day during morning rush hour. - 14 April 2007



Management at the Unilever factory in the Doom Dooma Industrial Estate, Assam, India, tried to smash the Hindustan Lever Workers Union, locking out its 700 members on 15 July 2007. The management then created a fake union and arranged for armed police to assist in coercing workers into transferring union membership to the fake union. - 20 July 2007



The Hindustan Lever Employees Union deployed teams across India to raise awareness among workers at Unilever's newest factories producing its biggest-selling brands. With one team traveling 4,500 km by land in just 6 days, and another team harassed and pursued by the police, thousands of workers learned the truth about the illegal closure of the Sewri factory in Mumbai. - 26 October 2007



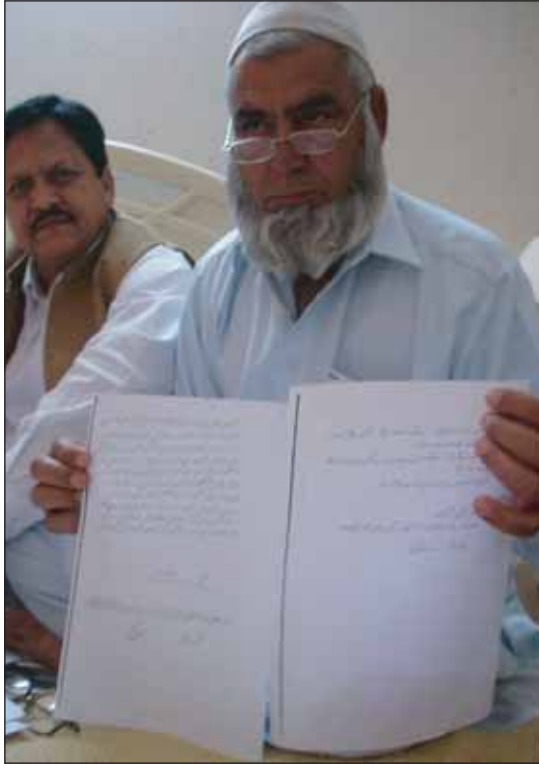
Management panicked and warned workers not to speak to "the men from Mumbai". So hundreds more workers came to meet them to find out why! - 26 October 2007



The union at Unilever Rahim Yar Khan opened union membership to temporary workers who were kept on casual contracts illegally for years, and assisted them in filing petitions in the Labour Court to secure permanent jobs at Unilever. - 20 September 2006



The union strongly opposed outsourcing by stopping the transfer of machinery to third-party contractors. - 27 September 2007



Management at Unilever Rahim Yar Khan fabricated an incident and framed Jalal Khan, a union shop steward and forklift operator who worked at the company for 37 years. Management filed police charges against Jalal Khan as well as the union leaders, claiming Jalal “attacked” an Assistant Manager. But the Assistant Manager gave two different statements to the police. In one testimony he says that Jalal Khan attacked him with a pistol and in the other testimony he says he was punched in the head! In court the management couldn't produce a single witness. So Unilever ignored the courts and dismissed Jalal Khan illegally.



The police charges against the shop steward, Jalal Khan, are used to justify the deployment of armed police and Elite Troops inside the factory. These armed police, living in the company's VIP guest rooms, are then used to coerce and threaten 300 temporary workers into signing their dismissal letters one by one. - 20 October 2007





The Action Committee for Dismissed Temporary Workers of Unilever Rahim Yar Khan continues to campaign for reinstatement and the right to permanent employment and union membership. – 20 October 2008



In Pakistan Unilever transferred its Blue Band margarine and spreads factory to a company called Dalda Foods which was set up by former Unilever managers. This 100% outsourcing allows Unilever to earn massive profits without employing a single worker directly. All of the workers are hired through labour contract agencies.



In May 2008 430 workers formed the Dalda Food Employees Union to demand the right to permanent jobs and decent working conditions. They were locked out, then 266 workers were illegally dismissed.



With the backing of Unilever management, Dalda management and contractors tried to create an “incident” to justify involving the police. But the union prevented these provocateurs from entering the protest camp and maintained peaceful rallies for 10 months.



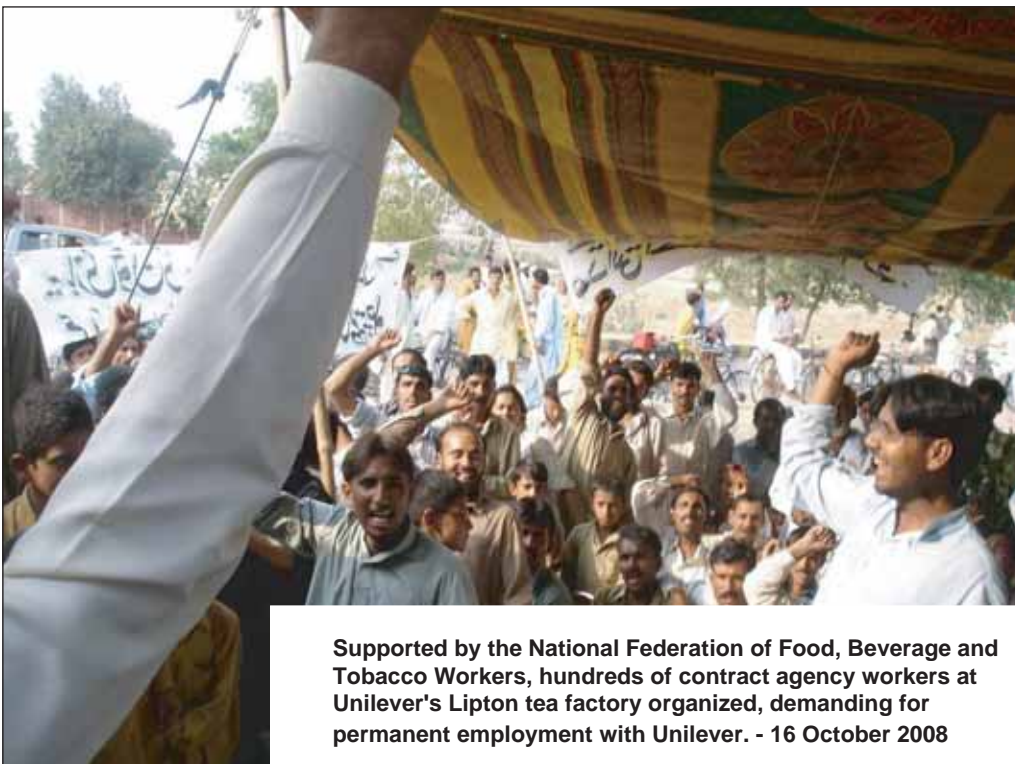
Unilever denies any responsibility for the Dalda workers, saying that it is a separate company. You can see in this photo the Blue Band brand was removed from the factory building...
 ... but it continues to manufacture Unilever's "billion dollar" brand **without a single permanent worker.**



At Unilever's tea factory in Khanewal, Pakistan, there are 745 workers making Lipton tea, but only 22 have permanent jobs while the other 723 are casual workers. These 723 workers have been employed indirectly through labor hire agencies on a temporary basis for an average of 15 years, and some as long as 25 years.



In August 2008 Zafar Iqbal and Abdul Hameed were dismissed after working at the Unilever Lipton factory in Khanewal for 30 years on minimum wage. They received no pension or retirement benefits. Hundreds of contract agency workers realized that if they did not organize and struggle, then they would suffer the same fate



Supported by the National Federation of Food, Beverage and Tobacco Workers, hundreds of contract agency workers at Unilever's Lipton tea factory organized, demanding for permanent employment with Unilever. - 16 October 2008



Voting for action - saying **YES!** to fighting for justice for casual workers at Unilever Lipton Khanewal tea factory. - 16 October 2008

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