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| Congress House, Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3LStelephone: 020 7636 4030 fax: 020 7636 0632 [www.tuc.org.uk](http://www.tuc.org.uk/)General Secretary: *Frances O’Grady* Assistant General Secretary: *Kay Carberry CBE*Assistant General Secretary: *Paul Nowak* |  |
| Mr Nirut RuplekGeneral SecretaryThai Pineapple Industry Association (TPIA)5/29 Soi Yakthanon Na Ranong KloykoeiBangkok 10110ThailandSent by fax and email | our ref thai/fog/otdate: 25 August 2014contact: Owen Tudordirect line: +44 (20) 7467 1325email: otudor@tuc.org.uk  |

Dear Mr Ruplek

Case against Andy Hall

On 8 August, the TUC signed on to a letter to TPIA members to express deep concern with recent actions by a fellow member of the TPIA, Natural Fruit Company, and Natural Fruit’s CEO and TPIA President Wirat Piyapornpaiboon, in suing Andy Hall, a British national and workers’ rights defender. We and over a hundred other trade union and human rights organisations called on the TPIA to encourage the company and its leader to drop their legal action, or expel the company from membership.

On 13 August, I understand that you sent our sister organisation in Thailand and fellow signatory to the letter, the State Enterprises Workers’ Relations Confederation (SERC), a response which made four points to which I would like to reply in turn.

First, you argued that the case against Andy Hall was a private matter for the company and its CEO, and nothing to do with the TPIA. On the contrary, the actions of the company and your organisation’s President cannot but reflect badly on your organisation, and on the Thai pineapple industry as a whole. Further on in your letter, you yourself make it clear that the TPIA intends to support and join the actions of the company and its CEO, which makes it impossible for your association to distance itself from those actions.

Second, you indicate that the absence of individual signatures on the letter we sent invalidates it in some way. It is quite normal where so many national and international organisations sign on to the letter for individual signatures not to be appended to the letter, and of course many of the signatories are collective, democratic organisations of which the leaders are merely representatives of those organisations. But please be in no doubt that I and the TUC fully support the points made in that letter. I am copying this letter to as many of your association’s members as I can so that they also are in no doubt of this.

Third, your letter suggests that Andy Hall’s motives (and therefore presumably the motives of all the signatories of the letter of 8 August) were to damage the Thai pineapple industry, and you threaten further legal action against Mr Hall. I assure you that Andy Hall’s actions in reporting serious workers’ rights abuses in the Natural Fruit Company on behalf of the Finnwatch labour rights organisation were designed solely to defend the interests of those workers. It is the actions of the Natural Fruit Company and its CEO – in allegedly abusing those workers’ rights and then in taking legal action against the individual who reported such abuses - which threaten to damage the reputation of the Thai pineapple industry. It is in your association’s power and that of the company and CEO to begin to rebuild that reputation by taking a different approach to the serious issues addressed in the Finnwatch report rather than legal and other harassment of those who seek to expose abuses. 'The success of the industry you represent cannot be at the expense of the workers in it.

That is also my response to your letter’s fourth and final point which suggests that the letter we sent on 8 August was based on false information and malicious intent, and was designed to spread both.

I would urge you and your association, before the court case begins on 2 September, to use your good offices to persuade the Natural Fruit Company and its CEO to withdraw the charges and enter into constructive dialogue with Thai unions and workers’ rights defenders to address the serious allegations made about conditions in the company and the industry more widely. The TUC would, along with the many other organisations who signed up to the letter of 8 August, be happy to assist in any process of reconciliation and addressing the reported abuses.

I would be grateful if you could respond to my concerns and proposal of a way forward.

As well as your members for whom we have contact details, I am also copying this letter to the Thai Ambassador to the UK and to the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and making it public.

Yours sincerely

**FRANCES O’GRADY**

General Secretary