



Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union
c/o 88 Fleet Street, London EC4Y 1DH
Tel: 075 900 98084 / 079 045 52106 Email: office@caiwu.org.uk

PRESS RELEASE

For immediate release

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Facebook Union Rep Dismissed – Cleaning restructuring plans set to proceed – Facebook shows no concern for human rights violations – Further Protests Planned for September 24th and October 1st

A cleaner and union rep at the centre of recent protests at Facebook has been dismissed.

Guillermo Camacho, a cleaning supervisor and workers' rep for the Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers Union, has been a key figure in the organisation of recent protests about unmanageable workloads faced by Facebook's cleaners.

Camacho was told by his employer, Churchill Cleaning, of its decision to dismiss him at a hearing on September 16th. Prior to this he had been removed from his workplace at Facebook's Brock Street offices in central London following a request from Facebook's facilities management contractor, JLL.

JLL claims to have exercised a contractual right to request the removal of any individual from a property under its management – a so-called third party pressure removal. Churchill, having failed to identify suitable alternative employment for Camacho, has now confirmed his dismissal.

Facebook, meanwhile, has shown no concern for this glaring human rights abuse taking place underneath its own roof. The dismissal of a worker on the grounds of their trade union membership or activities is outlawed under the Employment Rights Act 1996, and such an act is in direct violation of Article 11 of the European Convention on Human Rights.

Both Churchill and JLL deny that Camacho's removal was the result of his union activities, referring instead to a series of alleged performance issues. However, Camacho can point to mitigating circumstances for each of these allegations, as well as an unblemished record during almost seven years at Facebook. The timing of his removal is also highly suspicious, having taken place immediately following the initial Facebook protests in late July.

While it is impossible to prove that Camacho's removal took place for anything other than Churchill's and JLL's stated reasons, what is certain is that Churchill has been determined to implement significant changes to the cleaners' workloads ever since it took over the Facebook cleaning contract in January of this year. CAIWU has seen letters to the cleaners dated December 2020 and signed by the company's Key Account Manager which outline the company's plans for 'an organisational review regarding the number of operational hours, the structure, posts and roles across all sites within the contract that may result in redundancy, change in working hours, change in structure and/or change in working patterns'.

Such sweeping changes are of questionable legality, since the workers' terms and conditions are protected by TUPE — the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) regulations introduced for precisely this purpose. But Churchill's plans didn't appear out of nowhere. Last year the cleaners successfully campaigned against similar proposals by Churchill's predecessor Bidvest Noonan. Those plans were abandoned when it became clear they were in direct conflict with Facebook's public position that no workers would be made redundant during the Covid-19 pandemic. Despite the pandemic being far from over, Facebook now appears to have abandoned that position. Repeated appeals from CAIWU for the company to intervene either in Churchill's restructuring plan or Camacho's case have resulted only in denials that it has any involvement in these matters.

Now that Camacho's dismissal has been confirmed, his only recourse is to take his case to an employment tribunal, where CAIWU intends to represent him. The union believes it has a strong case. However, according to organiser Danbert Vanzetti, 'Even if Guillermo is successful at the tribunal he won't get his job back. Churchill and JLL are counting on that. It looks to us as though their plan in firing him is to try and scare the other cleaners into giving up their campaign.'

The cleaners so far show no sign of being intimidated. They plan to continue their campaign for as long as necessary, until Churchill abandons its restructuring plans and their former colleague gets the justice he deserves.

Further protests are planned for Friday 24th September at Facebook's Brock Street and Rathbone Square offices, with more to follow on Friday October 1st.

Protests:

Friday September 24th, 4pm: 10 Brock Street, NW1 3FG

Friday September 24th, 5pm: 1 Rathbone Square, W1T 1FB

About CAIWU: The Cleaners & Allied Independent Workers Union is a registered trade union representing over a thousand workers mainly in London's cleaning industry. We believe that every human being is entitled to dignity and respect in the workplace, and it is our mission to help our members fight for this basic right, along with others like fair pay, terms and work conditions.

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Notes to editor:

For more information, please contact the CAIWU communications office:

communications@caiwu.org.uk

Tel: 07927 451 462

<https://caiwu.org.uk>