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For immediate release

Industrial action by cleaners at Google's King's Cross HQ now 'almost inevitable' – Protests to continue as Cleaners Reps remain suspended without evidence – Google and Principle attempt to persuade workers to incriminate colleagues

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Industrial action by cleaners at Google's King's Cross HQ is now 'almost inevitable', according to the Cleaners and Allied Independent Workers' Union, after investigations of two suspended cleaners failed to result in their return to work.

Henry Ramirez and Jorge Nelson Cardona were suspended last month, on the eve of talks at ACAS aimed at resolving a number of long-running issues between the cleaners and their employer Principle Cleaning Services. The dispute has already led to noisy street protests outside Google's offices at 6 Pancras Square, and CAIWU says the protests will continue unless the situation is resolved.

According to Principle, Ramirez and Cardona were suspended following allegations that each was involved in the disappearance of items from their workplace. However, following the investigatory hearings held last week, Principle and Google have refused to allow the suspended cleaners back to work despite being unable to produce any evidence to support the allegations. Cardona says that Principle managers weren't even interested in discussing the allegations at his investigation. 'They just kept trying to persuade me to take another job,' he says.

CAIWU believes the suspensions to be a barely-disguised attack on trade union activists amongst the Google cleaning team, and suspects the two organisations of working together to try and undermine the union's influence.

One cleaner has reported coming under intense and sustained pressure to incriminate her suspended colleagues. In the kind of sinister scene more reminiscent of *The Third Man* than a routine day at work in a central London office block, Veronica Morales says she was led from her workplace in Tottenham Court Road, where Ramirez also works part time, and taken by car to King's Cross. On arrival, she was ushered into a meeting room to be confronted by a number of managers from both Google and Principle, who proceeded to try and persuade her to incriminate Ramirez.

Morales says she is now concerned about the possibility of facing victimisation herself, after she told her interrogators that if they had any evidence to support the accusations they should produce it rather than trying to use her to advance their anti-union agenda.

The cleaners' situation at Google has been deteriorating for some time. Workers report that in some cases their workloads have doubled due to reductions in staff numbers, with the additional physical demands leading to large numbers of leg and back injuries.

These ailments are exacerbated by Principle's refusal to provide adequate cover during absences for sickness or leave, nor any kind of contractual sick pay scheme — a failure which results in cleaners having to report for work when not physically fit to do so and consequently denying themselves sufficient recovery time.

The cleaners are also campaigning for the right to take up to four weeks annual leave consecutively, and for their employer to match the terms of bonus schemes offered by other Google service providers.

The issues raised by the removals are:

- Under normal circumstances, a company cannot simply relocate an employee without conducting a proper consultation process. However, outsourcing clients routinely insist on the inclusion of contractual terms with their suppliers reserving their right to determine who is and is not allowed on their premises. If the client says someone must be removed, the employer has no option but to pull them out.
- Under such circumstances, the employer is obliged to make reasonable attempts to find suitable alternative work for the employee. In practice, however, this often means workers either having to accept significantly inferior pay or conditions or facing dismissal if they decline an offer that the employer deems suitable.

CAIWU's campaign web site is at: <http://caiwu.org.uk/google/>

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.

About Principle: Principle is a £54 million contract cleaning company. It employs over 2,200 people and services over 250 clients. It claims to be passionate about 'people, quality and innovation'.

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Notes to editor:

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