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## Factory workers demand reinstatement of unionists

### NATIONAL

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Workers gathered to protest at the factory and demand that trade union leader Meth Rat and trade union activist Peng Teav be reinstated and paid back wages from the day they were stopped from working on August 28. **CENTRAL**

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A group of 385 factory workers employed at Pactics (Cambodia) Co Ltd in Siem Reap town's Svay Dangkum commune submitted a petition to the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training on Wednesday, asking that two sacked trade union representatives be reinstated.

On August 28, 385 of the company's 400 workers gathered to protest at the factory and demand that trade union leader Meth Rat and trade union activist Peng Teav be reinstated and paid back wages from the day they were stopped from working.

Rat, the leader of the independent solidarity union at Pactics, told The Post on Wednesday that protests had continued. He confirmed that the protesters submitted a petition to Minister of Labour Ith Sam Heng.

"We still go on strike and submit the petition pressing for a quicker solution to [the protests]," he said.

He said the reason he and Teav were fired on June 6 was that he had shared information about the suspension of workers at the factory on August 28 via the Workers Trade Union Federation.

He said the company fired 80 night-shift workers and they had asked him to request that the company suspend them instead.

"During the Covid-19 pandemic, we demand that workers not be fired and the company to suspend their work [instead]. But the company decided to stop them [from working] permanently," he said.

Factory administration head Thim Thavy said the dismissal of the two union representatives occurred because they had acted against the company's internal regulations.

She said Rat abused workers and Rat and Teav had leaked internal company matters to outside trade unions. This resulted in a complaint against the company brought to the Ministry of Labour.

She said the two shared internal matters on social media. The Department of Labour in Siem Reap province has yet to summon the company for clarification.

"They intended to damage the company's reputation by posting comments in English and Khmer, as our company has clients abroad. They said the company implements procedures wrongly by suspending employees.

"We didn't stop them because of discrimination. The company follows rules equally for all," she said.

Thavy said the workers were protesting without understanding the situation and said they were incited to do so.

The company, she said, would not accept the two representatives back because it would render the company's internal regulations ineffective.

The workers demanded three things from the factory – their representatives be reinstated, a basic \$190 wage as announced by the ministry, and pre-2019 seniority indemnity payments.

The factory's owners decided to accept the second and third demands.

Im Chamroeun, the deputy head of the provincial Department of Labour could not be reached for comment on Wednesday.

Chan Vorny who joined the protests said they demanded the reinstatement of the two representatives because the factory dismissed them for unclear reasons.

She said Rat would jokingly touch the hands and legs of female workers, but they didn't mind and never filed a complaint

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