



FAWU CELEBRATES JUSTICE FOR DISMISSED BLUE RIBBON WORKERS FINALLY REINSTATED AFTER EIGHT YEARS

The Food and Allied Workers Union (FAWU), a proud affiliate of the South African Federation of Trade Unions (SAFTU), stands triumphant alongside our members as we celebrate a historic, landmark victory for the working class. After nearly 8 years of bitter legal resistance and corporate delaying tactics, 31 of the initial 56 unfairly dismissed workers of Premier Foods' Blue Ribbon Bakery will finally be reinstated to their rightful positions.

This momentous victory brings to an end a long-running saga of corporate injustice in South Africa's modern labour history. It sends an unambiguous message to arrogant employers across the country: the wheels of justice may grind slowly, but they grind thoroughly, and the power of worker unity will never be defeated.

FAWU Fought Corporate Tyranny

The dispute started in November 2018, when 670 FAWU members at the Blue Ribbon Bakery, a division of Premier Foods FMCG in Salt River, Western Cape, embarked on a protected national strike. Our members were engaged in a brave, three-month-long struggle over a wage dispute to lift the wages of impoverished rural workers up to the level of their urban counterparts.

Instead of negotiating in good faith, the management of Premier Foods chose to weaponize South African labour laws against our members. The company proceeded to dismiss 83 of the 670 striking employees while 145 received final written warnings.

A CCMA Arbitration award in May 2022 found most dismissals unfair and reinstated many employees with backpay and some without backpay. It upheld some dismissals and issued warnings for lesser offences.

The Labour Court judgement rendered on 12 November 2025 dismissed both the review by Premier Foods to set aside the reinstatement of employees and the cross-review by the union that challenged the employer's approach to dismissal, the lack of retrospective reinstatements and limited backpay for acquitted employees.

FAWU petitioned the Labour Appeal Court to appeal the judgment and we are awaiting a date to be issued for the hearing.

FAWU wants to unequivocally state that workers cannot be punished willy-nilly for exercising their constitutional right to withhold their labour.

FAWU Vindicated Against Corporate Union Bashing Tactics

FAWU refused to abandon its members and took the fight to the judiciary, navigating an exhausting legal battle. The union fought back in court to interdict these retaliatory corporate tactics. Today, the complete and unconditional reinstatement of these workers stands as a testament to their resilience. These comrades lost their livelihoods, suffered severe financial distress, and faced immense psychological strain for years—all because they stood up for a living wage and structural equality in the baking and milling sector.

Status of Protected Strikes Preserved

This victory is not just a win for the affected Blue Ribbon members and their families; it is a safeguard for the entire South African labour movement. It reaffirms that a protected strike is an undeniable constitutional right. Employers cannot use underhanded restructuring, mass suspensions, or bad-faith operational retrenchments to break a strike or purge active union members from the workplace.

FAWU demands that Premier Foods now treats these returning workers with the dignity and respect they have fought so long to secure. FAWU will closely monitor their reintegration onto the factory floor to ensure they face zero victimization, harassment, or workplace isolation. Consultations relating to our members' reintegration has started on 1 July 2026.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the families of our members for their decades of patience, and to the broader SAFTU federation for sustained support through the darkest hours of this struggle.

Long live the fighting spirit of the Blue Ribbon workers, Long live!

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