

Statement from Minister of Home Affairs, Sen. the Hon. Michael Fahy, JP

Good afternoon,

As you are aware, in the past few days we have witnessed various levels of industrial action stemming from an employment dispute between the Bermuda Industrial Union and the Fairmont Hamilton Princess.

At the earliest opportunity the Ministry of Home Affairs was advised of the situation and sought to bring the parties together so that the issue could be resolved.

I advised on Monday that under Section 5 of the Labour Relations Act 1975, and in the interest of seeking a resolution, I referred the matter to a dispute panel on Saturday 1st February 2014, with each party being invited to appoint their assessors by 3rd February.

It was anticipated that since the matter was referred, that both parties would withdraw any action until the arbitration process has concluded and ensure that business operated as normal as possible.

However earlier today, and for the second time this week, I've had to step in to address the ongoing industrial action – and this time it was regarding a dispute with the Bermuda Industrial Union and Fairmont Southampton Hotel.

And in an effort to address this most recent impasse, this morning I also referred the matter to a dispute panel in the interest of seeking a resolution.

Since referring the matters to arbitration, we witnessed a demonstration by union members, which included some public service workers, in support of the union's stance.

My understanding this afternoon is that those public service workers have since returned to work to provide critical and commuter services.

Yet, while we recognise the rights of workers to demonstrate in solidarity for their cause, we must be mindful that there are mechanisms in place which allow for the proper protocols to be followed so that it doesn't result in a disruption of services to the public.

As it relates to the BIU / Fairmont disputes, at this time, I can advise that earlier this afternoon the parties came together with a view to discussing the matter in accordance with the arbitration process.

We will continue to do our due diligence to monitor the situation and follow the guidelines set out under the Labour Relations Act 1975 to ensure that we come to some form of resolution that benefits all concerned.

Finally, I said earlier this week that the entire situation is very unfortunate for a number of reasons and it remains my sincere hope that the BIU and Fairmont can find some common ground on this.

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As the Minister responsible for Labour, I recognise and support the view that the rights of the worker must be upheld and protected

And I think we must also be mindful of the current state of our economy and our hospitality industry.

Our economy continues to be in recovery and our tourism industry remains in a very precarious state.

So we must do all we can as a people and as a Country to ensure that we protect and preserve what strides we have made in these areas.

Thank you.