# A CALL TO ACTION TO RANK-AND-FILE AUTOWORKERS: MOBILIZE SUPPORT FOR THE CLARIOS STRIKE!



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**Statement of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC)** May 18, 2023

*Originally published on the World Socialist Web Site.*

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The strike of 525 autoworkers at the Clarios battery plant outside Toledo, Ohio is of decisive importance for autoworkers everywhere.

This is the first stage in the contract fight of 150,000 Big Three autoworkers in the US and 23,000 in Canada. In this fight, the auto companies, the banks and the Biden administration are determined to carry out the transition to electric vehicles (EV) entirely at workers' expense by slashing wages, cutting hundreds of thousands of jobs and devastating entire cities and towns. The contracts expire in September.

The outcome of the struggle at Clarios will determine the future course of events. It is therefore necessary that workers approach the strike strategically, as a critical battle in a broader war.

Striking workers at the Clarios plant on May 14, 2023 [Photo: WSWS]

Clarios workers, who voted down the proposed contract by 98 percent, need more than words of support. They need acts of solidarity. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) calls on autoworkers to show their support by refusing to handle Clarios batteries at Big Three plants across the US and internationally.

Because this basic act of solidarity will be sabotaged by the UAW bureaucrats, rank-and-file organization will be required to enforce it. At present, the UAW has Big Three workers putting scab Clarios batteries into cars, an act of open sabotage against the strike that drastically undermines autoworkers everywhere.

To this end, the IWA-RFC urges workers to establish Clarios Strike Support Committees to spread information about the strike, inform workers of what is at stake and ensure that no worker handles scab batteries. This must be discussed by workers at every plant and on every shop floor in connection with preparing rank-and-file organizations throughout the auto industry, well in advance of the Big Three contract expirations.

The ruling class is determined to inflict a serious defeat on Clarios workers to set the tone for the contract expirations at the Big Three, as well as the contract for 350,000 UPS workers which expires in July. In coordination with their corporate partners and with the government, Clarios is demonstrating the ruthless strategy the companies plan to use industry-wide.

After years of concessions and give-backs, Clarios is demanding below-inflation pay increases and scheduling changes that will cut workers' pay by $15,000 per person. The company knows these terms are totally unacceptable to workers who confront a cost-of-living crisis and whose past contract included a pay freeze. Clarios workers took two pay cuts in recent years while the company makes billions in profits.

After workers overwhelmingly rejected this contract, the company rolled out its strategy to break the strike. Its plant manager attempted to scare workers with the threat of a plant closure. Clarios sent a team of lawyers from the firm Oagletree Deakins into court to demand a Lucas County judge issue an injunction against picketing, citing the "grave and serious" consequences of the strike's impact on the global auto industry.

Judge Michael Goulding granted the request immediately on the bogus ground that workers posed a "danger" to the community, limiting pickets to five people. Sheriff's deputies have been moving buses of scabs through picket lines in an attempt to restart production using the barbaric methods of the 19th and 20th centuries. This operation is both anti-democratic and bipartisan: Judge Goulding is a Republican, while County Sheriff Mike Navarre is a Democrat whose last campaign was endorsed by the UAW bureaucracy.

The corporation's aim is to keep the workers isolated and wear them down into submission. Clarios calculates that future profits from inflicting a serious defeat will far surpass the immediate cost of lost production and that their Big Three clients will forgive a few missed shipments if breaking the strike at Clarios helps impose a defeat on their workforces this September.

To the company, the success of this strategy depends on keeping the Clarios workers isolated, with the help of the pro-corporate UAW bureaucracy.

This is the first major test of the new UAW leadership led by Shawn Fain, who was elected through a fraudulent election marked by the lowest turnout of any national union election in US history. Fain, who received just 3 percent of the votes of the rank and file, is active on social media promoting the self-serving lie that the bureaucracy has turned the corner on past corruption and corporate collaboration.

Fain's actions show otherwise. His administration has taken no serious action to inform autoworkers of what is at stake, let alone that a strike is happening. He has not visited a Clarios picket line or issued any statement about the strike and its significance.

Without the independent mobilization of the rank and file, the UAW bureaucracy and Clarios will succeed in crushing the strike. It would be a grave mistake to "wait and see" whether the UAW bureaucracy will fight, because it will not, and there is no time to lose.

There is another path forward, through breaking the isolation and unifying the struggles of the rank and file internationally.

There is growing support for a common fight across plants and across national borders, which is the only way to harness the real strength of the working class. Stellantis workers from the 5,000-person Jeep plant confront mass layoffs and have organized convoys to the picket line, while workers who were wrongfully terminated from the nearby Dana Inc. driveline plant have sent delegations to the strike.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is fighting through the blackout in the corporate media to inform autoworkers about the Clarios strike and make contact with Clarios workers across the US and around the world to mobilize support for the strike.

One Clarios worker at the company's plant in Florence, South Carolina sent a message of support to strikers through the World Socialist Web Site, stating: "Underpaid and overworked! Same issues in Ohio are here in Florence SC!"

On Wednesday, supporters of the IWA-RFC in Germany visited the Clarios plant in Hanover in western Germany, the largest car battery production plant in Europe. One Clarios worker told the World Socialist Web Site: "If the salary is less than inflation, I don't think they can live with it, so I support [the strike]. … If this company is international, which of

course it is, we all have to come together to fight for a common purpose. We all have to come together as workers."

> ***"It's a worldwide problem. Everywhere, inflation is high, things are getting more expensive and the take-home pay is very low... We all have to come together as workers." Clarios battery worker in Germany supports striking workers at Clarios in Ohio, USA#workersoftheworldunite pic.twitter.com/Xcsw7U2V8T — World Socialist Web Site (@WSWS_Updates) May 18, 2023***

Another German Clarios worker said, "The bosses have no idea about our work. They should try to work here for just three hours. It's the same in the US. They should keep striking. It should happen here, too."

There are dozens of Clarios plants located throughout the world, including in France, Italy, Belgium, India, China and Brazil, and workers must begin thinking in terms of a globally coordinated fight to challenge the transnational corporations.

**Autoworkers: Don't undermine yourselves by handling scab batteries!**

**Educate your coworkers about what is at stake!**

**Reinforce the strike at Clarios by setting up Strike Support Committees at your workplaces to prevent the handling of Clarios batteries!**

**Turn the struggle at Clarios into a broader struggle of the entire working class!**

Contact us to discuss setting up a rank-and-file strike support committee »

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Get involved with the rank-and-file campaign in the UAW elections.

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