SOLIDARITY WITH THE STRIKING COAL MINERS AT POLYAK MINING IN İZMIR, TURKEY!



BY WILL LEHMAN
Mack Trucks worker and rank-and-file candidate for UAW president

I send my warmest greetings and full solidarity to the 1,243 coal miners at Polyak Mining in the Kınık district of İzmir who have taken the courageous step of halting production in a wildcat strike.

Your action, led by the Independent Mining Workers union (Bağımsız Maden İş), is a powerful expression of working-class strength. By walking out independently to demand unpaid wages, promotion rights, retroactive contract benefits, guaranteed seniority and severance protections, and real health and safety measures, you are defending not only yourselves and your families, but the rights of workers everywhere.

Miners know better than anyone that safety cannot be separated from wages and working conditions. Around the world, mining corporations extract immense wealth from the labor of workers while cutting corners on safety and delaying or denying basic contractual rights. Your fight exposes this system.

The current strike is a short distance from the Eynez coal mine in the Soma district where 301 miners were killed in a methane explosion on May 13, 2014—the worst industrial disaster in Turkey's history. Even as miners' bodies were being pulled out, police fired tear gas and water cannons on tens of thousands of striking workers demanding justice. The Soma disaster led to a rebellion, which spread nationally, against the pro-corporate unions and the Erdoğan government's program of privatization, austerity and sacrifice of workers' lives for profit.

Your current struggle follows the recent wildcat strike of the Migros warehouse workers, led by DGD-Sen, whose determined action won broad public support and forced concessions. These back-to-back struggles demonstrate that workers do not need to wait for permission from pro-corporate union bureaucracies or government officials to defend their livelihoods. When workers act collectively and independently, they become a powerful social force.

As a Mack Trucks worker in the United States and a candidate for president of the United Auto Workers, I know that the issues you are fighting—unpaid wages, unsafe conditions, attacks on seniority, erosion of benefits—are the same issues facing workers in auto plants, warehouses and factories in the US and internationally.

At the center of my campaign is the fight for the international unity of the working class. The economic nationalism of the UAW bureaucracy and its support for Trump's illegal trade war measures only divide the working class. Corporations operate globally. Our response must also be global. This means building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to coordinate our struggles across national borders.

I call on miners, auto workers, logistics workers and all sections of the international working class to support the Polyak miners' strike. No worker should stand alone. The development of rank-and-file committees, independent of bureaucracies that collaborate with corporations and governments, is essential to unifying our struggles across borders.

Your fight in İzmir is part of a growing movement of workers worldwide who are saying: enough is enough.

An injury to one is an injury to all.

In solidarity, Will Lehman

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

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