

# Mexico: Goodyear fires workers for forming independent union

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On July 9, the Goodyear tire company fired about 50 workers in its San Luis Potosí plant in retaliation for a strike action that took place in April, when about 600 workers walked off the job to fight for better working conditions and to defend the right to form their own union. Workers at the plant have announced a work stoppage to protest the firings.

The workers are in an open struggle against the Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) “protection union,” which signed a deal with the company to “represent” the workers more than two years before the plant had even opened. The agreement with Goodyear was reportedly negotiated by Tereso Medina, an Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) politician who is leading efforts in the Senate to undermine workers’ rights and strengthen the power of the companies.

The fired workers said that they were shoved into a room and notified that they were being let go without any justification by the company. Several others reported that Goodyear representatives visited their homes and asked that they not return to work. An elected spokesman of the workers told *Código San Luis*: “The company’s lawyer, José María de la Garza, approached me at home with a very despotic attitude, verbally harassing me and threatening me, telling me that I was fired. When I asked why, he just told me that they were cleaning house. He said: ‘You know what you have been doing,’ meaning promoting a genuine movement of workers.”

The firings took place even though management had explicitly agreed not to take reprisals against those who participated in the April 24 -25 strike.

After workers announced that they would shut down the plant the night of the firings, Goodyear, with the backing of the CTM, brought in armed thugs to try to intimidate them. State and municipal police, acting at

the behest of the company, were also called in to prevent further protests. “We are not sure if we can protest or not because people are afraid. We fear for our safety because there are outsiders intervening in this and they are armed,” said one worker in a press conference. “We are afraid that something will happen to us, they are threatening us, provoking us. They are taking reprisals against us, some workers are even being denied the right to leave the facilities.”

Workers reported that the mood inside the plant is very tense, with armed thugs monitoring employees as they perform their duties. Several workers report being physically harassed by union representatives. “There is about one thug per machine, or patrolling the area, so that [workers] do not join our movement. There are workers that are resisting and refusing to work. The plant is basically shut down,” said a representative of the group.

Individuals at the plant earn 223 pesos per day (about \$11 US) and reportedly last only an average of three months due to difficult working conditions. The Goodyear plant in San Luis Potosí, which opened in 2017, has a capacity of six million tires a year and is the company’s largest in Latin America.

As they continue their struggle for a living wage and the right to representation of their choice, workers can expect no support from the state and federal governments, which are firmly in the pockets of the transnational corporations. While acknowledging that the firings were “not justified,” Manuel Lozano Nieto, the secretary of labor of San Luis Potosí, urged workers to “keep things calm” and wait for “dialogue” with the company and the government. This empty appeal is simply a call for blanket protection for the company while doing nothing to defend those who were fired in a clear violation of labor laws.

Laborers at the plant have now formed the rank-and-file Independent Workers Union of Goodyear Mexico. The new organization promptly joined the Federation of Democratic and Independent Unions, an initiative announced earlier this month by 10 “independent” unions of workers in the auto, mine, and aviation sectors. The group represents over 25,000 Mexican workers, including 9,500 Volkswagen workers and 4,000 Audi workers.

The federation is seeking a direct channel of communication with the president-elect, Andrés Manuel López Obrador, popularly known as AMLO. By orienting to this conventional capitalist politician, the Federation of Democratic and Independent Union exposes the dead-end of such groupings, however radical its slogans or sincere the intention of rank-and-file workers.

The objective logic of the pro-capitalist and nationalist orientation of these unions will inevitably lead to their collaboration with management and the state, despite their promises not to become another corporate union like the CTM.

The blatantly pro-company position of unions like the CTM is not due merely to “corrupt” or “malicious” leaders, but is tied to their acceptance of the “right” of corporations to own the means of production and move to any corner of the world in search of lower labor costs and higher profits. The rise of globalization has undermined any basis for national organizations to obtain concessions from transnational corporations. Instead, unions all around the world are assisting the financial elite in clawing back gains that were won by the militant struggles of entire generations.

Goodyear workers must unite not with capitalist politicians like AMLO, but with workers in all sectors of the economy, including the 300 Audi workers in Chiapas who were also fired earlier this month. Workers and youth who are looking to improve their living conditions and guarantee their social rights need more than a nominally “independent” organization. They require, above all, a socialist political perspective to put an end to the capitalist system. We urge workers to contact the *World Socialist Web Site* Autoworker Newsletter to create links between workers at plants internationally and coordinate the future mass struggles of the working class.



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