

Statements of support from New Zealand, Australia and the US for a full investigation of the Pike River mine disaster

Our reporters
23 May 2021

The World Socialist Web Site is publishing statements of support for the Pike River Families Committee, representing 23 of the 29 families of the men who died in the 2010 Pike River coal mine disaster in New Zealand. The families are fighting to overturn the Labour Party-led government's decision to end an underground forensic investigation of the mine. The government aims to prevent the recovery and examination of evidence that could be used in criminal prosecutions of those responsible for the disaster.

More than a decade after the explosions at Pike River, no one has been brought to justice. Successive governments, union bureaucrats, and state agencies have protected the company's executives and managers, whose negligence turned the mine into a death trap. The WSWs urges readers around the world to read and share our statement, Justice for the 29 miners killed at New Zealand's Pike River!, and send messages of support for this crucial fight.

Taryn, New Zealand:

I support the push for the continued investigation into the mine to recover the truth and possibly any deceased. I believe it is important to know what happened to cause the explosion so this may be avoided in the future and better practices can be in place for future mining so this may never happen again. My partner worked underground at Pike and I know there were inadequate safety procedures and equipment and that incident reports were ignored and pushed aside. These people must be held accountable and not able to work in these positions again. I hope the mine is not sealed in these coming days and that we can get some answers.

Vic Blair, New Zealand:

Do the right thing. Continue the search inside the mine for the evidence, don't drill for it. You're only going to collapse the roof on it. Stop paying lip service to health and safety. Show us you are the leaders you claim to be. Show us you have nothing to hide.

Peter Petterson, New Zealand:

All evidence obtained by the police and govt departments

should be fully examined before any consideration is given to sealing the mine permanently.

Karen Morton, New Zealand:

I am very angry about this obvious cover up and want to see all criminals involved prosecuted. I feel so sorry for all families of the mine workers.

Ellyse Mounsey, New Zealand:

This needs to be resolved for the families and loved ones and someone needs to be held accountable.

Lily Marr, New Zealand:

Keep going guys. You'll always have our support xx

John Thomson, Australia:

I fully support the Pike River Families Committee investigation into the truth surrounding the death of 29 miners in the 2010 Pike River mine explosion.

I also support the Pike River Families Committee's demand that the Labour Party-Greens government, led by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, overturn its decision to end the forensic investigation of the mine and seal it permanently, entombing the men's bodies and crucial evidence as to the cause of the disaster.

By sealing the mine, the above said government is also sealing the investigation of those who must be held responsible for the explosion and subsequent deaths of the 29 miners. A royal commission of inquiry in 2012 established that the mine was a death trap because the atmosphere underground was in the explosive range on many occasions leading up to the first blast. The mine had no second means of egress and its main fan was installed underground and could have been the source of ignition for methane and coal dust.

PRC's executives, directors and managers are being shielded by the authorities, and no one has been held accountable.

The investigation must be allowed to continue.

Lou Lander, Australia:

Every time I read that "Chief executive Peter Whittall was

initially charged with health and safety breaches, but these were dropped by the Department of Labour in 2013, in exchange for a one-off payment to the 29 families. The regulatory department itself was complicit in the disaster: it knew about the dangerous conditions at Pike River but did not order the mine closed. Its backroom deal with Whittall was later ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court, but the charges were not reinstated. While the disaster devastated entire communities, Whittall and others in PRC's senior leadership were able to move into comfortable positions in other companies around the world" it makes me so angry. I implore this investigation to continue.

Rebecca Burgan, Australia:

For Michael. For Blair. For all those men that should be with their families. I support you.

Warren Duzak, United States:

To the people of New Zealand,

The job of underground mining for many of us is beyond comprehension, going underground often before first light and not coming out until dark. Miners and their families deserve the utmost consideration and protection. The case of the New Zealand mine and deaths is outrageous and fills me with disgust.

As an American US Army veteran, former journalist and the son of a New York City Fireman, I am proud to add my name to the list of those calling for justice for these dead miner/comrades and their families.

Erik Schreiber, US:

I wholeheartedly support the Pike River Families Committee and all those who lost loved ones in the Pike River disaster. I call on all workers to do the same. We must defend the dignity and value of workers' lives over corporate profits. A full investigation of the explosions is necessary. The Pike River Coal managers, union bureaucrats, and government officials who created the conditions for this disaster, along with those who attempted to cover it up and protect the perpetrators, must be identified and held accountable. The fight for the truth about this terrible crime must become part of a broader fight against capitalism and for socialism.

Harvey Lichtman, US:

As a teacher in New York City I support the Pike River Families Committee's demand for a thorough investigation of the disaster and the prosecution of the company leaders who turned the mine into a death trap. In the US, as in the world, teachers who bring labor history to their students recognize that the struggle of miners for basic rights and decent work and living conditions has been at the forefront of the centuries-long struggle of the working class in every country. The details of the 2010 disaster are horrifying and the lessons of it must be publicly manifested, both by

investigation of the facts and in bringing the perpetrators, both corporate and governmental, of a malign indifference to worker safety to justice.

Furthermore, the global pandemic increases workers' consciousness around the world for understanding the parallel and connected policies of the capitalist governments. As in the US, New Zealand's ruling parties can make the effort and find funds to enrich the corporate elite with billions while dismissing workers' health and safety needs. With the US, New Zealand is increasing its military presence in the Pacific, widening the danger in partnership with the US of war with nuclear China. Clearly the protection and safety of humanity is not a priority of the ruling classes whether in the mines or for world peace.

I thank the *World Socialist Web Site* for supporting this campaign and informing its readers around the world of the need for workers to defend each other.

Hector Cordon, US:

I stand completely with the Pike River families in demanding that justice be done: that the Pike River mine not be sealed, that a full and transparent investigation of the explosion, and of those responsible for the tragic deaths of 29 miners and the subsequent cover-up is immediately begun.

Peter, US:

Most likely PRC management have a good idea about what caused the explosions. However, it is crucial to obtain the material evidence of the cause. Sealing the mine and ending the investigation is in effect saying that mine owners can continue with their unsafe methods of operating the mines and there will be no repercussions for the owners and their management.

The working class all around the world is being run over roughshod by the elites, treating the workers as if they are of no consequence. This is furthest from the truth. The only way that the workers can gain power is by banding together across all national boundaries.



To contact the WSWs and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)