

“This was a crime”—Readers support families’ fight to fully investigate Pike River mine disaster

Our reporters
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The World Socialist Web Site is publishing statements in support of the Pike River Families Group, which represents 22 of the 29 families of the men who died in New Zealand’s 2010 Pike River coal mine disaster. 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.*

To read previously published statements from readers around the world, click [here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#). Former miners in the UK have contributed statements [here](#). Workers in Sri Lanka have contributed statements [here](#).

*We also draw readers’ attention to the Pike River Families Group’s online petition: “*Help stop critical evidence in Pike River Mine from being locked away forever!*”*

Charlie Seeney, ex-miner Moura Mine, now Dawson Mine, Australia:

Put the blame where it should be, at the company’s feet. Greed should never overshadow safety. 29 Good Men lost their lives at Pike River, justice should be served. I live in a town where there have been three major mine disasters and the look of despair is still on some faces. I am truly sorry this has happened to your community. My heart goes out to the families of men taken too soon.

I don’t understand why the mine was allowed to operate with only one means of egress. This is mandatory in every mine as a safety precaution. Your ventilation people should have picked up on this and ceased production until it was rectified. By having this in place the rescue squad may have stood a chance of at least seeing what went wrong. The second means of egress

should have been at or near the shaft fan, that way any falls in the drift would have been bypassed.

Regards, Charlie Seeney

Kahurangi Hippolite, New Zealand:

The first time I heard about the Pike River disaster, I was living in Mount Isa, Australia. My husband was a Australian citizen and he was working underground as a maintenance fitter. Watching the disaster unfold on Australian news media was absolutely devastating and gut wrenching and being a Kiwi from the South Island made it harder to fathom that this could happen in this day and age.

Although my husband has passed away, I have never forgotten what he told me at the time, and that was: there is always a safe way to get men out of a bad situation today if they were trapped underground, and he said others he had worked with said the same thing. Like me, he was shocked when we found out that the NZ government at the time was not going to encourage a rescue team to go back in to rescue these men after the second explosion.

Since I have been back in NZ I have tried to be as supportive as I can be in finding out the truth behind the deaths of these poor men, and it is not about just laying their memory to rest for their families, it is about making it safer for future generations to come. I support the Pike River families.

Anthony Byrne, Australia:

This was a crime, no doubt about it. As an underground miner for many years my heart goes out to the families.

Tom, New Zealand:

The refusal of the Labour government to fully investigate the Pike River mine is an egregious attempt to cover-up the misconduct of the mine’s owners and the authorities. [Government minister and former union official] Andrew Little personifies the betrayal of the mine workers and their families by the EPMU [Engineering, Printing and Manufacturing Union] and the government. His claims that further investigation would be too costly and that he has fulfilled his obligations to the victims’ families are disgusting lies. This is yet another example of Labour and the unions serving business, instead of workers. The Pike River families must be supported.

Bevan Wilson, New Zealand:

We firmly believe we need to get these men out of the mine and give them a proper burial/funeral for closure for their families. The government who took away the mine inspectors and brought in OSH should be held responsible. The foremen that were responsible for the staff should be held responsible, and the people who knew this mine was unsafe should be held responsible too. Waving money under workers' noses to carry on in an unsafe environment is wrong. The people who offered the extra money need to be held responsible for their actions.

I believe John Key knew that these people were alive [after the first explosion] and when you go into the mine and find these miners sitting against the wall dead, John Key will need to be held responsible. This is why he resigned as prime minister.

Soldier on and get these people out: DO NOT let them seal it up. You owe that to the families!!

Joseph Divjak, Australia:

The Labour government and the trade unions have blood on their hands. They are revealing their true class allegiances once again to the capitalist state and the corporations they serve by seeking to bury the Pike River families' demands. We demand justice for the 29 miners killed and a full investigation into the mine disaster and the prosecution of those responsible.

Trev, New Zealand:

Impunity/immunity needs to be removed from the corporate/political system and replaced with accountability for their actions and/or acts of negligence. Why should those responsible be protected from their guilt by hiding behind their dirty tactics, while the innocent are left to suffer needlessly?

Karen Olsen, New Zealand:

Where is the humanity? This was an election-winning promise, just another being reneged on by Jacinda [Ardern] and her bunch of twits. But hey, plenty of money for cycleways and suchlike from road users paying um 0 towards the cost of.

These wonderful men lost through a murderous company and their suits, who likely have never ever had a smudge of coal on their hands, happily played Russian Roulette with these dearly loved, dearly missed men of our earth. How Dare They. These men and their families' lives stolen by these murderers is absolutely disgusting.

For a government voted in by the people on a life-changing promise to not only all people of NZ that voted for them, but most importantly to the memory in respect of these brave men and their families. [This] is the most disgusting thing they have lied about and gone back on, their promise to we who pay for their privileged lifestyles. It is so typically ugly. I hope the people remember this out of respect for our brave lost men. My heart is with you families and your men. I will never forget you and your men.

Lest We Forget Our Pike 29, well our Pike 29 are also Dad 29 Son 29 Brother 29 Uncle 29 Cousin 29 Grandson 29 Grandad 29 Mate of Many 29. xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx xxxxx

Kohine Rata, New Zealand:

Att: MP Andrew Little & Labour Party, the Pike River Families & men deserve justice, whatever it takes. The injustice will forever linger like a black cloud until the truth is known. You have the world's best mining experts that know where there's a will there's a way. Don't Give Up, gone that far without a hitch, now is the time to finally seek the truth.

MP Andrew Little, now is the time to let Pike River Families finally know the Real Truth of what actually happened on that tragic fateful day. They deserve that.

Do What is Right, carry on, the men may be closer than you think. DON'T GIVE UP, LABOUR PARTY, YOU HAVE THE MEANS & OPPORTUNITY TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT.

Jesse Monroe, New Zealand:

They need to carry on and finish the job. Find out the truth once and for all, the families need closure and those responsible should be held to account if there is a case to answer. Recovery was handled wrong from the very start and has been flawed in many aspects.

Mike Newport, New Zealand:

It doesn't matter who is in charge of the country, whoever made the calls needs to be held accountable. The investigation needs to go the whole way and not be held up by arse-covering politicians. Do it without a doubt [and show] who is responsible. Recourse can come later but hold those responsible to account!

Jeffrey and Dorothy Graham, Australia:

It is a criminal decision by those responsible to cover up the Pike River Mine disaster. The families deserve respect with a full investigation of the avoidable disaster.

Craig Burgess, Australia:

Do not give up your fight to overcome this injustice. Let the rights of workers prevail. The whole wide world is watching.

Ivan Woolley, New Zealand:

I support the committee to have this disaster fully investigated before the mine is sealed forever.

Prom Tuialii, New Zealand:

Keep up your righteous fight and life is more important than corporate profits.



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wsws.org/contact