

German workers back striking US Volvo workers: “Your struggle has international significance”

Our reporters
9 June 2021

Volvo Truck workers in Virginia have been on strike since Monday. Their industrial action is not being reported by the German media. We publish below the first messages we have received from workers in Germany in support of the striking Volvo workers.

Zafer, a Ford worker in Cologne

The Volvo workers must not let up. They must hold out until they have achieved all their demands. We are behind them. International solidarity is very important now, especially for us autoworkers. The big companies have their factories all over the world, and everywhere the same game is being played. The threat of relocating production is used to impose worse conditions.

International solidarity starts on the assembly line. Here we have Turks, Italians, Croats, Africans, Arabs and many other nationalities alongside our German colleagues.

I think it's particularly good that the Volvo workers stood up to the UAW. We should do the same here at Ford in Cologne. The IG Metall union is no better. The union officials and most of the union's works councillor representatives are completely aloof. They stand fully on the side of the board of directors and, above all, try to line their own pockets. They don't call themselves co-managers for nothing. They use all the tricks, are dishonest and mendacious. Sometimes, I think we are far too cautious here and let ourselves be intimidated far too often. But if the American workers are fighting now, that's already an important step.

Florian M., an apprentice at a metalworking company in Southern Germany

The Volvo workers have my full solidarity! I admire your determination in rejecting the contract presented by the union and going on strike again.

I read on the WSWS that you have built a workers' committee and that your committee played a significant role in rejecting the contract so that the union could be put under pressure.

That the union is trying to persuade you to make rotten compromises does not surprise me. Here in Germany, the trade unions have a long tradition of betrayal. In 1914, the unions and the Social Democrats (SPD) in Germany allied themselves with the ruling class and prevented strikes against the First World War.

Just as you built an independent committee, at the end of the First World War workers in Germany built committees in all workplaces that united into workers councils. They organised strikes against the world war, which eventually led to revolution. But again, the unions and the SPD allied with the class enemies and defeated the revolution.

Your struggle has international significance and shows workers all over the world that workers can organise independently of the trade unions, making them aware of their tremendous power.

The German working class looks to America with great enthusiasm.

In Germany, the Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party) is calling on all workers to build committees, and I hope that we in Germany will soon have some committees to come to the aid of our

American class brothers and sisters.

Here in Germany we are facing mass layoffs, but the American workers have shown German workers how to fight back by building independent committees. I urge you, even if the union strangles the strike again, to continue the strike under the leadership of your committee. Only when the bureaucratic agents of the class enemy are no longer at the head of the strike can the isolation be broken and the struggle extended to other factories by building more committees. Long live the international solidarity of all labourers!

with the struggles of the miners in Alabama and Chile and all other work stoppages worldwide and expanded into a general strike. Only in this way can the root cause, the capitalist system, be fought and a socialist state established that is oriented towards the needs of the people and the workers. Support the Socialist Equality Party, the ICFI and all its sister parties around the world and build the political vanguard of the working class. To all the striking Volvo workers, the greatest honour and respect!

Andi A., a truck mechanic in Bavaria

I hereby declare my solidarity with the striking Volvo workers and support them with all my strength. They have rejected the criminal and inhuman policy of management and the UAW union and have formed an action committee of Volvo workers. I myself work in a truck repair plant and know only too well management's brutal approach to wage dumping [employers offering cheaper labour costs] and unsafe working conditions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Here in Germany and Austria, several plants in the automotive and supplier industries are on the brink of collapse, such as the MAN Truck plant in Steyr and the Bosch plant in Bietigheim. Thousands of workers are threatened with unemployment or a huge deterioration in working conditions.

The trade unions are using every means they can to suppress opposition in the workforce and push it in a nationalist direction. They are also in cahoots with management on the issue of forcing workers to work under insecure coronavirus conditions: They blackmail workers by saying they will lose their jobs otherwise. They also put pressure on workers when they make redundancy offers.

Only through an independent action committee and international networks can a long-term improvement be achieved. The workers must network worldwide because the same problems arise everywhere. Only at the international level can a solution to the current situation be fought for.

Labour struggles must be united with all the strikes,

Philipp, an airport worker in Hamburg

I follow daily the developments in the working class worldwide on the WSWS. I have been particularly impressed by reports of your struggle at the Volvo Trucks plant and how you have defended your interests against the treacherous union steadfastly and consciously. You rejected the rotten contracts and made clear demands not to be sold out cheaply. I see you as the model and the beginning of a burgeoning international class struggle that is deepening, especially through and during the coronavirus crisis.

The working class must see itself as a unity in the world that must not be divided. It is waging common struggles with common goals and demands. As a global working class, the action committees formed out of the class struggles must unite across sectors and internationally.

You are not alone, stand firm! Stay in contact with the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees and the WSWS. This is crucial for a common strategy.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact