

London bus safety campaigner Kevin Mustafa calls on colleagues to defend David O'Sullivan: "Let's get behind our brother and show solidarity"

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Kevin Mustafa, a former London bus driver, has campaigned for health and safety protections for bus workers throughout the pandemic. He published a Facebook video on Saturday calling on bus drivers to get behind the fight to reinstate Cricklewood driver David O'Sullivan.

Until June this year, Mustafa worked at Potters Bar garage owned by Metroline, the same company that dismissed O'Sullivan in February for invoking his rights to a safe workplace under Section 44 of the Employment Rights Act.

"In my opinion the jumped-up charges that David O'Sullivan was dismissed over are an absolute joke," Mustafa says in the video. "What we need to do now is stand together, we need to stand alongside David, because David doesn't deserve to be treated the way he has. And we need to fight to get him reinstated."

In March and early April 2020, as the first wave of the pandemic claimed the lives of 14 bus drivers across London, Mustafa waited for the company to act.

But even after a belated national lockdown was introduced by the Johnson government on March 23, Mustafa was stunned at Metroline's ongoing failure to produce a COVID-19 risk assessment to protect its workforce—a failure matched by Unite the union. Metroline accounts for the highest number of workplace fatalities from COVID-19 among London bus operators.

In mid-April, following the death from Covid of a much-loved controller at Potters Bar and of 36-year-old Holloway driver Emeka Nyack Ihenacho, Mustafa decided he had to do something. Experienced in health

and safety, he drew up a risk assessment for Potters Bar at his own initiative and presented it to management on April 14. Mustafa proposed a range of safety protocols, including one-way systems and social distancing to help prevent virus transmission.

He became a thorn in management's side.

As Mustafa told the *World Socialist Web Site* this week, "It's my opinion that London bus drivers were failed by the bus companies, they were failed by TfL, they were failed by the Labour Mayor of London and failed by Unite the union. It was all about mileage and profit and I believe we were treated as collateral damage, our lives meant nothing."

Against high-level efforts by TfL and the bus companies to conceal the spread of infections, Mustafa fought to expose the truth, initiating several Freedom of Information requests showing the extent of disease and death among London bus workers. He publicly opposed Unite's collusion with the bus operators and TfL including their denial of PPE and face masks to drivers.

Officially, 69 London bus workers have died from COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

In January this year, with a second wave of the pandemic underway and infections spreading at his own garage in Cricklewood north west London, O'Sullivan tried to alert his co-workers and informed them of their rights under Section 44, including the right to remove themselves from imminent danger.

In a Facebook message accompanying his video, Mustafa wrote to drivers, "To be dismissed in a pandemic for clearly raising what was a massive concern at Cricklewood was IMO disgraceful. All bus

workers suffered traumatic stress early in the pandemic and preservation of ourselves and others was our only aim.

“If Unite’s reps had stepped up and shown balls like David and I, maybe there wouldn’t be 60 mourning families right here and now.”

The WSWs urges London bus workers to share Kevin Mustafa’s video and take up his call for O’Sullivan’s reinstatement.

As Mustafa told the WSWs, “David is not just one man acting. He was acting and everyone else was feeling the same. Some weren’t brave enough to step forward, but David was. He shouldn’t be shot down for that.”

What you can do

- Read O’Sullivan’s latest campaign statement
- Donate to the CrowdJustice campaign
- Send a message of support
- To provide information relevant to O’Sullivan’s unfair dismissal case, or to request more information about O’Sullivan’s defence campaign, please contact: londonbusrankandfile@protonmail.com



To contact the WSWs and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact