

Decision to shutter Ford Saarlouis is looming closer: Stop the plant closure!

Rank-and-File Committee of Ford Workers, Germany (Ford-Aktionskomitee)
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The following statement by the Rank-and-File Committee of Ford Workers in Saarlouis was published in German ahead of the works meeting at the Saarlouis plant on Wednesday. Send a WhatsApp message to the following number to contact us: +491633378340

Dear Colleagues,

On Wednesday there is a works meeting in Saarlouis and one day later there is another in Cologne. Saarlouis works council member Holger Michel announced to us that we are to be informed about the current status of negotiations in the bidding competition.

But we already know that the works councils are only stalling with lies and half-truths while they have long been in discussion about how to shutter our plant. They intend to stall until it is almost impossible to fight to defend our jobs.

Now and for this reason we must strip the works council of its mandate to negotiate for us and expand our rank-and-file committee. We must join forces with workers from Valencia, Cologne and all other sites to defend every job and prevent any cuts in our wages.

Everything made public so far indicates that the works council and the unions have already sacrificed our plant. In Valencia, the UGT union signed a collective agreement running until 2026 that contains severe wage cuts and an extension of working hours.

On April 26, state Minister President Anke Rehlinger (Social Democratic Party, SPD) spoke on Saarland Radio about possibly selling off the plant to an investor. She said she knows “that this site can be an attractive location for other producers. ... We are prepared for anything,” Rehlinger said.

The works council wants to use our jobs, our wages and our working conditions as a single bargaining chip. Masses of jobs are being destroyed and wages decimated in order to lure investors who will gut the

plant in the end. The IG Metall union is only negotiating how it can best capitalize on the restructuring through transfer companies and retraining.

Particularly vicious is how they try to use the threat of job losses at our plant as a lever to push down the wages and working conditions in Cologne. “The workforces at the German sites will stick together,” declared Jürgen Kerner, head treasurer of IG Metall, at the May Day rally in the state capital, Saarbrücken.

Our colleagues in Cologne will find out on Thursday what the IG Metall means by “solidarity”: A delegation of IGM works councils from Saarlouis will travel to Cologne and explain that cuts in Cologne are necessary to save Saarlouis.

But this is false. In the end, wages will be cut in Cologne and Valencia and our plant will be shuttered anyway, because that is the logic of the entire bidding war that the works council and IG Metall are organizing against us on behalf of the corporate management.

The only way to defend our jobs is to have real solidarity with our colleagues in Cologne, Valencia and all the other sites, to fight together both against the theft of our wages and against the closure of our plant.

The first step is to join and build our rank-and-file committee to oppose the works council. Ford's strategy is to use IG Metall and its works councils to get these attacks past us and close the plant.

We now need our own strategy to successfully fight back. The Ford Rank-and-File Committee proposes that the following demands must be part of a successful struggle to defend our plant and protect our compensation at all sites:

- Unite the workforces in all European sites and beyond. We have contact with colleagues in Valencia and Cologne; this contact must be extended in order to

coordinate and expand a joint struggle. Together we are strong.

- No more secret negotiations between the works council and corporate management! Immediate disclosure of all agreements and discussions between the works council and corporate management!

- We will not retreat a single step! Defense of all jobs at all locations! Not one cent in wage cuts; no extension of working hours!

We know that the struggle will not be easy and that IG Metall and the works council will do everything in their power to sabotage it. But we also have powerful allies. All over the world, workers' resistance is growing against rising prices and layoffs, which are rapidly intensifying due to the policies of economic war against Russia and horrendous rearmament.

In Sri Lanka, workers have paralyzed nearly the entire country to force the resignation of the government and prevent the IMF's looting of the country. Mass protests have also occurred in Greece, Spain and France.

These struggles must be united and directed against capitalism, which has nothing more to offer us than wage theft, unemployment and war. Instead of spending billions on rearmament and starting a third world war, billions must be invested in good jobs, health care and education.

We say this: this far and no further. We are not the next Ford Genk. We must really fight. Strikes and labor struggles have been victorious in the past and can still be won today. But to do so, we need to create an organization in the plants that is not afraid to carry the fight through. Ford and IG Metall should fear us, not the other way around.

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