

Google lays off 12,000 workers as tech jobs bloodbath intensifies

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With the announcement by Google parent Alphabet of 12,000 layoffs, the attack on jobs in the technology industry has been taken to a new level. The number of tech jobs eliminated in the first three weeks of the new year has already reached one third of the total of more than 241,000 industrywide layoffs in 2022.

While many of these job cuts are concentrated in the US, the assault on tech workers is global in character. In an email sent to Google employees on Friday, CEO Sundar Pichai wrote that the layoff of 6 percent of the workforce would impact jobs internationally and “cut across Alphabet, product areas, functions, levels and regions.”

Pichai also said the layoffs were made “to ensure that our people and roles are aligned with our highest priorities as a company.” In other words, as demanded by the financial oligarchy, the jobs of Alphabet employees are being sacrificed to ensure the profitability of the \$1.27 trillion global technology conglomerate.

No one should underestimate the ruthlessness with which the corporate elite is pursuing its attack on jobs and living standards. While Pichai wrote, “We’ve already sent a separate email to employees in the US who are affected,” workers in New York City reported they learned about being laid off when they arrived at work on Friday morning and were denied entry into the company’s corporate offices.

With the Alphabet announcement, the number of tech job cuts this year reached more than 75,000, according to the Tech Layoff Tracker maintained by TrueUp. Among the other mass layoffs announced in 2023 are Amazon (18,000 jobs), Microsoft (10,000 jobs), Salesforce (7,000 jobs) and Cloud Software Group (2,000 jobs).

The layoffs at more than 200 other tech firms—

including 1,100 jobs at Capital One, 950 jobs at Coinbase, 900 jobs at game company Black Shark and 800 jobs at Crypto.com—make up the balance of 50,000 eliminated positions.

The tech layoffs are both shocking and devastating to the workers affected, both directly and indirectly. A report in the *New York Times* on Friday said, “Millennials and Generation Z, born between 1981 and 2012, started tech careers during a decade-long expansion when jobs multiplied as fast as iPhone sales... Few of them had experienced widespread layoffs.”

Meanwhile, it is taking laid-off workers in all economic sectors longer to find new jobs. According to the US Labor Department, the number of unemployed workers who have been without a job for 3.5 to 6 months increased in December to 826,000, up from 526,000 in April.

The jobs massacre in the tech industry is the spearhead of a conscious policy by the ruling establishment to impose the inflation crisis on the backs of the working class. The Biden administration and the Federal Reserve—along with capitalist governments and central banks internationally—have been raising interest rates at a near-record pace to trigger a recession, increase unemployment and beat back the demands of workers for wage increases that keep up with the rising cost of living.

Jerome Powell, US Federal Reserve chairman, stated this policy explicitly in a speech on January 10, when he said, “Restoring price stability when inflation is high can require measures that are not popular in the short term as we raise interest rates to slow the economy.”

The tight monetary policy is being felt most directly in the technology sector because the industry is being hit by the combined impact of increased borrowing costs, sharply lower stock market values and a reduction in business volume from the overall economic slowdown.

Alongside the assault on jobs there is a shift in

workplace practices to attack the conditions of tech workers. In a comment in the *New York Times* on Sunday “titled “The Era of Happy Tech Workers is Over,” Nadia Rawlinson, former “chief people officer” at Slack, wrote, “The layoffs are part of new age of bossism, the notion that management has given up too much control and must wrest it back.”

While tech workers have been considered a relatively better-off section of the labor force, workers in the high tech industry are subject to the same laws of the capitalist profit system, based on the exploitation of the working class, as in all other sectors.

As Rawlinson writes, “After two decades of fighting for talent, chief executives are using this period to adjust for years of management indulgence that left them with a generation of entitled workers.” The days of remote work, WiFi compensation, meal stipends and other incentives are over, she insists, and “tech chief executives are now optimizing more for profitability than for growth, sometimes at the expense of long-held organizational beliefs.”

Behind these changes, Rawlinson says, are “activist investors” who have taken “prominent positions in their stocks” and have “called for the companies to slash costs, reduce nonstrategic investments and, notably in Meta’s case, aggressively reduce its workforce.”

There is no question that the layoffs and attacks on working conditions are being demanded by billionaires on Wall Street who seek to extract from the working class the combined \$4 trillion in stock valuations they lost in 2022.

As one Google employee tweeted, “Imagine being 24 years and ten months at a company that has a 5 year stock vest schedule that fully vest on your 25 year... and being let go a month and change before 25... and the company that cut you made \$198 billion last year. I HATE CAPITALISM.”

In every industry, the corporate and financial oligarchy wants the working class to pay for the global crisis of capitalism. In the auto industry, the electric vehicle manufacturer Rivian has announced the layoff of 6 percent of its workforce as part of a restructuring plan. EV manufacturer Tesla has announced a hiring freeze, with layoffs soon to come.

In December, Stellantis announced the indefinite shutdown of its Jeep assembly plant in Belvidere, Illinois, with 1,350 workers set to be laid off when the plant idles in February. Shortly afterwards, CEO Carlos Tavares threatened that further job cuts “will happen everywhere

as long as we see high inflation of variable costs.” This has already started, with workers at the Dundee, Michigan engine plant informing the WSWS that more than 100 workers are being laid off.

Layoffs have also been announced at Intel Corporation, Goldman Sachs, Bed Bath & Beyond and BlackRock, and job cuts are expected to be announced at the *Washington Post* any day.

The pro-corporate trade union apparatus is doing nothing to oppose the jobs massacre. The Communications Workers of America (CWA), which has recently made a push to organize tech workers, has responded with nothing but a tweet decrying the job cuts. In fact, the CWA bureaucracy has spent decades collaborating in the slashing of telecom workers’ jobs.

The Socialist Equality Party advocates the development of rank-and-file committees in all workplaces, controlled democratically by the workers themselves and committed to the needs of the working class, not corporate profit. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees has been established to coordinate and unify the struggles of workers in the United States and throughout the world against the attack on jobs, living standards and working conditions.

This must be connected to a struggle against the capitalist system. Google, Facebook, Twitter and other tech giants exercise enormous power and control over the Internet. They are deeply integrated into capitalist governments and have collaborated in state censorship, especially of left-wing publications, including the *World Socialist Web Site*.

The tech industry can no longer be left in the hands of billionaire private owners like Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates and Elon Musk. Instead, these monopolies must be transformed into public utilities, collectively owned and democratically controlled by the working class, as part of the socialist reorganization of economic life. Only in this way can the industry be run for the benefit of society as a whole and ensure free, democratic access to the Internet and other critical technologies.



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