

Worker, father of 3, killed on the job at Stellantis plant in Italy

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Last week, machine maintenance worker Domenico “Mimmo” Fatigati was killed on the job at the Stellantis STLAB plant in Pratola Serra, Italy, near Naples, leaving behind a widow, three children, and bereaved extended family and friends who all describe him as “a hard worker” and a person who was “all about family.”

Fatigati, a contractor hired by Stellantis to perform routine maintenance at the plant, was crushed to death by the machinery on which he was working. His colleagues at the plant immediately called for strike action in solidarity; however, the entire confederation of unions—CGIL, CISL, UIL, FISMIC and UGL—limited the strike to the Pratola Serra factory for a few hours in a highly orchestrated maneuver. The union bureaucracies limited the strike so as not to impinge on corporate profits and in order to maintain the lid on increasing anger among workers across the industrial spectrum.

Cynically, a spokesperson for the multinational company, with a string of safety violations on its record, said, “Stellantis expresses its deep sorrow and sympathy to the family of the victim,” promising to collaborate with accident investigators.

As Stellantis restructures its operations in a transition to electric vehicles, the company is threatening to close several plants in Italy and withdraw operations in the country entirely if the government does not concede corporate handouts and consumer subsidies for electric vehicles. CEO Carlos Taveres—who received a massive €36.49 million (\$39.5 million) pay package in 2023—has virtually extorted state and national governments in countries where Stellantis operates. Italy is no exception. Earlier this month, he told Bloomberg News, “If you don’t give subsidies to purchase EVs, you are putting at risk the Italian

plants.”

Stellantis is not alone in deaths on the job. Earlier this month, three workers were seriously injured and five were killed at a Florence, Italy, Esselunga supermarket construction site after a concrete beam and layers of slabs collapsed, crushing the workers to death. Early indications show that the site was riddled with safety violations. In an attempt to defuse public outrage over the tragic deaths, the CGIL and UIL unions called a toothless two-hour national strike.

In August 2023, five rail workers were killed by a high-speed train while replacing part of a track near Brandizzo, Italy, on the outskirts of Turin. Despite the leadership of CISL calling the preventable disaster “an outrage to all Italian workers,” only limited and disjointed strike action was called by the major unions.

According to *Statista.com*, 5,580 workers were killed on the job in Italy between 2008 and 2022. In 2022, 703,432 overall occupational injuries were reported to Inail, Italy’s National Institute for Insurance against Accidents at Work. This figure is nearly 139,000 more than the 564,000 injuries reported in 2021. On-the-job deaths exploded in 2023, with 1,000 workers losing their lives in preventable accidents at work. Less than two months into 2024, deaths on the job have reached nearly 200.

The staggering increase was due to both “traditional” injuries and occupational COVID-19 infections, up from 49,000 in 2021 to 120,000 in 2022. In 2020, total COVID-19 claims were one in every four, rising to one in six in 2022.

Proposals to place responsibility on the employers for deaths on the job and redefine these as “homicides” have been opposed by the establishment. While a plethora of upcoming measures are aimed at criminalizing so-called “illegal” hirings (either

undocumented immigrants or off-payroll workers), the fascist government of Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni has announced that corporations and employers will not be held responsible, despite well-documented flagrant violations.

In a conversation with a CGIL union leader, Meloni praised her government's "efforts," which consisted of hiring 800 new inspectors, while in the same breath she admitted the utter failure of this move to produce any improvement. Preventing any demand on the employers, Meloni lauded a proposal by her fascist party, Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy), which seeks to introduce a weekly hour of job safety training in schools. Setting aside the ominous character of such a conception, which has more to do with shifting the burden on youth rather than educating them, no one knows how this would result in safer conditions in the workplace.

Meloni reported that some of the propositions she received from the trade union confederation were "interesting" and that she planned to meet with the national union bureaucracy to "listen and work together on the proposals."

The increasingly naked corporatist character of the union bureaucracy has been revealed, as the entire apparatus has been appealing to a fascist government as the supposed defender of workers' living standards, calling on the Meloni government to abide by Tavares' extortionary plans. No worker can entrust his or her life in the hands of such a criminal partnership.

Following the supermarket collapse deaths in Florence, the CISL, Italy's second largest trade union confederation, rushed to a strategy of damage control, proposing a "responsibility pact" to commit government, institutions and social partners to a "national strategy" and a "call [on] all social actors to their collective responsibility and launch a renewed season of confrontation to stop deaths and injuries" at work, all under the tidy slogan "Let's stop the trail of blood."

The CISL is the same union that, at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, "respectfully" asked Amazon to consider "compliance to the governmental protocol, which highlights the safety criteria in the workplace" after wildcat strikes by workers shut down operations at the Amazon logistics hub in Castel San Giovanni in the wake of a massive number of

COVID-19 deaths among their colleagues, who contracted the deadly virus while on the job at the facility.

The CGIL, CISL, UIL and all the traditional trade unions quickly fell in line after the corporations decided that the pandemic was impeding profits and instructed the government to declare the end of the pandemic and remove all life-saving measures.

The government, in lock-step with industry, swiftly declared an end to the pandemic last year. Despite this, 172,684 official COVID-19 cases were reported in January of this year, and 196,309 Italians and counting are dead from the virus. The number of deaths and infections is a gross undercount, as all government mitigation and tracking strategies have been dismantled.

Workers' anger is mounting. Commenting on workplace deaths in a recent interview with the WSWS, Stellantis worker Tommaso Pirozzi said: "Regarding the issue of workplace accidents, there is no real intention to change the situation, either on the part of the government or the trade unions, in that they are complicit. In case of failure of safety or simply illegitimate operations, there is complicity on their part because union representatives are inside the workplaces, like in Pomigliano at Stellantis. They simply turn the other way. Then, they shouldn't come inside our workplaces or through the media beating their chests. They are the primary perpetrators of at least moral responsibility for the injuries and deaths of our brothers and sisters."

The trade union apparatus and government will do nothing to stem the tide of injuries and deaths on the job. This task falls to the working class, which must unite across borders and fight on a genuine socialist strategy against the trade union bureaucrats, corporations and capitalist governments that place profits before lives.



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