Suit by former Colorado meatpacking worker alleges extensive history of workplace safety violations at JBS

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Salima Jandali, a former worker at the JBS beef processing plant in Greeley, Colorado, has filed a lawsuit in federal court alleging a prolonged history of safety failures at the plant. She says that she was viciously retaliated against and eventually ultimately forced out of the company for bringing the violations to the attention of management.

The suit was filed in the midst of repeated occurrences of gruesome workplace injuries across the US and internationally. Last week, an unnamed worker was killed in an industrial meatgrinder at the Tina's Burrito plant in southern California. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File committees is calling for full investigations into all these incidents and for workers to take full control of safety procedures to prevent such incidents from happening again.

Jandali, a 31-year-old native of Morocco, was responsible for training new employees on safety procedures at the plant. "I just want to show the world how corrupt they are, and hopefully this is going to raise awareness so people know the truth about what's going on in there," she said in announcing the lawsuit.

Jandali's suit alleges the company's total indifference to safety training.

"They [JBS] didn't want to complete the classes for new employees, and the retaliation began when I started speaking out," Jandali said. The complaint she filed with the federal government states the company "continually prioritized production over worker safety."

She said she was repeatedly harassed by management over her insistence on following mandatory safety protocols, and that her locker and personal property were vandalized on several occasions. She also claims that her work boots and hard hat were hidden by management, preventing her from accompanying new hires to the processing floor. This happened at least 25 times according to Jandali's complaint.

JBS then falsely claimed that Jandali never filed paperwork to take time off to see her father while he was undergoing surgery, using this to fire her. After her employment was reinstated following a union grievance, Jandali returned to find many of her files deleted along with years of emails.

The complaint further said that JBS "supervisors routinely put production employees to work on the floor when they had not completed all required safety training." It continued, "Many production employees were non-English speakers who needed interpreters to understand and and complete the trainings," and which were never provided to them.

Due in part to language issues, many of the workers were not even aware that safety training was taking place. Jandali was instructed by management to falsify training records for employees who had not attended their assigned sessions. "Ms. Jandali objected and explained that production employees were suffering serious injuries, including losing limbs, and safety protocols needed to be followed," however, "her concerns were completely ignored."

Employees were even prevented from taking bathroom breaks to keep pace with the increased demand, she says. One worker even urinated in her pants on the production line, according to a September 2024 report filed with the Equal Opportunity Commission.

The allegations in Greeley shed light on one of the most exploitative industries in America, with some of the highest injury rates. But they also follow a long pattern of malign neglect of basic safety procedures at JBS in particular.

In 2020, the plant pressured workers to take their shifts even while sick during the opening months of the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result, six workers died at the JBS facility, with more than 200 workers testing positive for the virus at one point. This was also the direct result of president Trump issuing an executive order during the final year of his first term to keep meat processing plants open

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during the height of the pandemic.

However, the bureaucrats of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union refused to take any action to protect lives at this or other meatpacking facilities across the US. At a Tyson pork plant in Iowa, they even worked out an "attendance bonus" with management, which was taking bets on how many workers would fall ill.

The Greeley plant was shut down twice in 2020, once for only two weeks due to an order by local authorities, and the second time over the summer due to a wildcat strike, where workers took matters into their own hands.

In 2021, a worker at the facility lost an arm after it got stuck in a conveyor belt. Also in 2021, a worker died after falling into a vat of chemicals used in processing animal hides. The worker, Bryan Duerst aged 55, had been installing a paddle wheel over the vat when his head was struck, causing him to fall into the vat. The subsequent OSHA investigation resulted in a mere $58,709 in fines for the multi-billion dollar company.

JBS Foods, which is headquartered in Greeley and operates its plant there under the name Swift Beef Company, also paid a $5.5 million settlement in 2021 for discriminating against Muslim, Somali and black employees. Later, in 2023, Packers Sanitation Services, a vendor for the JBS plant, was fined $1.5 million for employing minors, including four minors at the Greeley plant despite the hazardous conditions present.

Moreover, last September an HR manager at the Greeley plant, Edmond Ebah, was accused of trafficking Haitian immigrants to work there, receiving kickbacks totaling $17,000. The workers had been sent to a motel with up to 8 workers sharing the same room and then later to small home where as many as 40 people resided at a time.

And recently, JBS Foods was also recently fined more than $280 million by the Department of Justice for participation in a bribery scheme related to the acquisition of Pilgrim's Pride, one of the largest meat producers in the US and also the company making the largest single donation of $5 million to Trump's second term inaugural committee.

The speed of work is so high that many workers report that they are unable to open their hands after clutching meat hooks for hours at a time with no breaks. Having to continuously operate meat hooks and knives at high speed for hours at a time, accidental stabbings and slashings at the plant are also extremely common. Workers losing fingers is also common.

Dahir Omar, a representative from the United Food and Commercial Workers (UFCW) Local 7, said the Greeley plant regularly operates at speeds up to 430 heads of cattle per hour, well over the recommended rate. "Never in my life have I seen line speeds like this," Omar said.

However, the UFCW has not mobilized a single job action in defense of either worker safety or in defense of the immigrant workforce against Trump's ICE crackdown.

The horrific issues reported at the Greeley plant are endemic of conditions present in not only meat packing, but in industries throughout the US and internationally which are being transformed into industrial slaughter houses. It follows near constant reports of gruesome worker injuries and deaths under conditions where even the most minimal safety procedures and protocols are being completely abandoned.

This must be opposed through the self-organization of the working class. As the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees declared in a recent statement:

> The IWA-RFC calls for the formation of rank-and-file committees in every factory, warehouse, plant and industrial facility, in the US and internationally. These committees must be democratically controlled by workers themselves, independent of the corporatist trade unions, and committed to defending the lives and interests of the working class.
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> ...This must be done in practice through mobilizing the power of the working class, independent of both parties and management lackeys in the unions, in a fight for workers' control. The major industries must be put under public ownership, run by workers themselves to meet human needs—not to enrich billionaires. This means replacing the dictatorship of the corporations with democratic workers' control. It means abolishing the system that sends teenagers into meat grinders and then covers up the evidence.

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