

# Migros warehouse workers' struggle continues despite Turkish police pressure and dismissals

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Thousands of workers employed in warehouses belonging to Migros, one of Türkiye's leading supermarket chains, have been protesting and staging walkouts since January 23 for wage increases and the right to organize, despite dismissals and detentions.

Migros, which has 3,789 stores and employs approximately 63,000 people including subcontractors, announced that it would give warehouse workers a 28 percent raise. The starting wage at Migros warehouses is 28,000 Turkish Liras (TL), while the average wage is 36,000 TL. As of 2026, the monthly minimum wage in Turkey has been set at 28,000 TL. The Turkish Statistical Institute (TÜİK) announced the 2025 inflation rate as 31 percent, while the independent Inflation Research Group (ENAG) said it was 56 percent.

Migros warehouse workers employed by subcontracting firms began protests on January 23 by walking off the job and demanding a 50 percent wage increase, led by the rank-and-file union Independent Storage and Transport Workers' Union (DGD-Sen). The protests spread to 10 cities and 12 warehouses, with 5,500 of the 7,500 workers participating in the wildcat strike in the first few days.

In addition to low wages and harsh working conditions, warehouse workers face constant violations of their legal rights, including weekly working hours, overtime pay, weekly holidays, public holidays, annual leave, occupational health and safety. Subcontracting is widespread in the sector, allowing companies to reap huge profits and violate these rights without damaging their "corporate identity."

Faced with the spread of the workers' struggle, management announced on January 26 that 7,875

workers employed in the warehouses had been transferred to the main company's payroll and dismissed approximately 300 workers who continued the struggle.

Some Migros warehouse workers are continuing their protests, demanding a 50 percent pay raise, the reinstatement of their dismissed colleagues, and no change in their job classification. Changing the workers' job classification will force them to join the pro-company Tez-Koop-?? union based at the parent company.

The laid-off workers continue their protests in front of the warehouses. In Istanbul, workers went to the villa of Tuncay Özilhan, the company owner and a leading capitalist, and staged repeated protests, demanding their rights. The workers faced police violence and many were detained multiple times.

Solidarity protests are being held in front of and inside Migros stores in many cities; while widespread statements of support are being made on social media, including by artists and academics. A boycott campaign against Migros continues.

Migros workers' determined struggle and the support they receive from broad sections of the population stand in stark contrast to the silence of the trade union confederations. While Migros warehouse workers represent the working class, which constitutes the overwhelming majority of the population, and their struggle against their miserable living and working conditions, the government-aligned Türk-?? (Tez-Koop-?? is affiliated with it), Hak-??, and the "opposition" DİSK confederations represent a privileged middle class whose interests are aligned with those of corporations and the state. The union apparatus serves

to keep workers under control and stifle any kind of independent initiative and class struggle.

The struggle of Migros warehouse workers demonstrated their potential to spread quickly to the Migros parent company and other companies in the sector. In recent weeks, warehouse workers at chain stores such as B?M, ?OK, and A101, which are known for low wages and intense exploitation, also went on strike and staged protests. Workers at the ?OK warehouse in Trabzon staged a walkout after rejecting a 27 percent wage increase—30 were fired on Monday.

Migros' parent company operates in the retail trade sector. For decades, the company has been signing sell-out agreements with Tez-Koop-?. Currently, the company and Tez-Koop-? are continuing negotiations for a new three-year sell-out agreement.

Following the change in the industry classification, the Tez-Koop-? union, which had ignored warehouse workers and their demands for years, issued a statement titled “The subcontracting system at Migros is over. Warehouse workers have won!”

DGD-Sen protested the cooperation between Migros and Tez-Koop-? in a statement made on Sunday on X and sent an open letter to UNI Global Union, of which Tez-Koop-? is an affiliate. The statement said: “To block DGD-Sen, the company is illegally reclassifying warehouse workers as ‘Trade/Office’ workers, the same category as cashiers at their stores. This ignores the high-risk nature of warehouse labor and strips workers of specialized safety protections, effectively trading physical safety for corporate control.”

The statement indicated that Tez-Koop-? played a role in the exploitation of workers: “A former senior member in the management of Tez-Koop-?, Veyzel Cingöz, transitioned from ‘representing’ workers to owning the very subcontracting firm that exploits them at the Esenyurt warehouse. This relationship functions like a pyramid scheme where the union leadership profits directly from the exploitation of the rank and file.”

Attention was drawn to the deep social gap between union leaders and workers: “While a Migros warehouse worker earned roughly 28,000 TL (\$642) a month last year, the General Secretary of Tez-Koop-?, Hakan Bozkurt, had a salary of 500,000 TL (\$11,460). While the members struggle to buy bread and provide their families with basic needs, the so-called union’s

leadership has been photographed gambling in luxury casinos in Northern Cyprus.”

DGD-Sen is filing a complaint with UNI Global Union, requesting that an investigation be launched and asking: “Will you stand with the resisting workers in the warehouses, or the corporate-friendly gamblers in the union-busting scheme?”

The answer to this question is clear. The corruption of Tez-Koop-? is not an exception; rather, it is merely a part of the union apparatus that has become an extension of companies and states in Turkey and internationally. In conditions where supposedly “militant” confederations like D?SK have outdone their right-wing counterparts in corruption, workers’ struggles can only advance through a rebellion against this entire union apparatus.

For this, workers need new types of mass rank-and-file organizations. Under conditions where production and supply chains are globally integrated and a globally connected working class has emerged through these networks and communication technologies, genuine rank-and-file struggle organizations can only be built based on an international class struggle program, not bankrupt national-based programs. The International Workers’ Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) was established to respond to this urgent need.



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