

# Turkish miners break through gendarmerie barricade, seizing mine

Ula? Sevinç  
3 March 2026

1,243 miners employed at Polyak Eynez Mining in the K?n?k district of ?zmir, Türkiye, seized the lignite coal mine on Monday, March 2, breaking through a gendarmerie/riot police barricade. The workers refused to back down in the face of pepper spray and water cannon.

The wildcat strike began on February 20 under the leadership of a grassroots union, Ba??ms?z Maden ?? (Independent Mine Workers' Union). The union has announced that if its demands are not met, the mine will be run by the workers themselves.

Security forces attacked the miners and detained union organizer Ba?aran Aksu, union attorney Abdurrahim Demiryürek, and two miners.

The Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi, the Turkish section of the International Committee of the Fourth International, called on all workers in a post on X to support this struggle and demand the immediate release of those detained and the fulfilment of the miners' demands, adding: "The trade union confederations, which have become extensions of the state and corporations, will not do this. Independent rank-and-file committees must be built for this fight."

Before his detention, Aksu addressed the workers: "This is what they think: 'If the miners seize the mine now, they will seize the power of the country next.' They are afraid of this. They don't want the power of the bosses to be shaken. If the miners run their own mine, then they can run their district, their province, and their own country. Isn't that right, comrades? They are afraid of this."

The state attack and the miners' determined dismantling of the barricade were covered by major national news outlets and the international press. Reuters posted a video report on X stating: "Workers at a Turkish mine clashed with police forces at a picket line in front of the mine entrance. The miners went on strike over wage and benefit losses."

The miners at Polyak are demanding the immediate and

full payment of their unpaid wages; the granting of promotion rights; payment of retroactive entitlements arising from the contract; guaranteed severance and notice pay rights; and the implementation of necessary occupational health and safety measures.

On February 25, miners walked 16 kilometers from the mine to the district centre of K?n?k and held a large rally with the support of the local community. On Monday, the miners rejected the company's offer to pay compensation in exchange for workers leaving.

The use of water cannon vehicles and the gendarmerie assault on the mine entrance have exposed the Erdo?an government's real stance toward the working class. Security forces were unleashed to protect the interests of domestic and foreign capital. Union officials, lawyers, and workers demanding their legitimate rights were detained.

Discontent is spreading among broad sections of the Turkish working class amid the Erdo?an government's brutal austerity program, the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, and the deterioration of working and living conditions, now compounded by the escalating imperialist war against Iran. The miners' militant struggle is inspiring workers facing similar conditions across the country. It marks the beginning of a new period in the class struggle.

After decades during which trade union confederations suppressed workers' struggles, the initial stages of a new movement are emerging—one that is reviving traditions of militant struggle.

While the fight of the Polyak miners has received widespread support from the population, the silence of all trade union confederations, including the "left-wing" Progressive Confederation of Trade Unions (D?SK), stands in stark contrast. It reflects the fear and hostility of the union apparatus—an extension of the state and the corporations—toward the development of an independent movement within the working class.

The events that drove the Polyak miners into struggle began with the murky transfer of Polyak Eynesiz Mining by Fiba Group, one of Turkey's leading holding companies, to the Chinese firm Qitaihe Longcoal Mining. This represents a joint assault on workers by a Turkish billionaire in alliance with Chinese capitalists. According to a statement by Bağcıoğlu Maden Şirketi, 70 percent of the mine's shares were transferred to Qitaihe Longcoal last December.

During the transfer process, 1,700 workers were laid off with severance pay under the oversight of Öz Maden-Şirketi, a union affiliated with the pro-government Hak-İş Sendikası confederation. The 1,243 workers who remain employed have been unable to obtain their wages and contract entitlements, totalling 450 million liras (US\$10 million).

According to Bağcıoğlu Maden Şirketi, the Polyak mine is "an operation located below sea level, carrying earthquake risk, with high methane gas levels, and requiring advanced engineering work due to roof pressure." The mine, where workers' lives are at risk, is located a few kilometers from the Soma mine, where 301 miners died in a mining disaster in 2014.

Will Lehman, the US autoworker who announced his candidacy for the presidency of the United Auto Workers (UAW), drew attention to this in a solidarity statement with the Turkish miners. He said, "The Soma disaster led to a rebellion, which spread nationally, against the pro-corporate unions and the Erdoğan government's program of privatization, austerity, and the sacrifice of workers' lives for profit."

Following Monday's gendarmerie assault and the detentions, Bağcıoğlu Maden responded to Lehman's call for solidarity on X, stating:

Thank you for your solidarity. Our union staff member Bağcıoğlu Aksu and two miner comrades were detained today for taking part in the struggle and are still being held in custody. We were on strike at Polyak Mining for ten days. We gave the company a deadline until 3:00 PM; the time expired, and, as we promised, we overcame all obstacles and occupied the facility. Be our voice. Thank you for your solidarity. Long live international working-class solidarity!!

The Polyak miners' resistance has galvanized workers facing similar conditions. Around 2,000 workers at Yeni

Anadolu Mining in Soma walked off the job, while 3,000 workers at İmbat Mining halted production for four days. The İmbat miners returned to work on Monday after their demands were met.

The struggle of the Polyak miners represents a fightback against the decades-long capitalist offensive. As in other countries around the world, the privatization of mines in Turkey has been accompanied by the gutting of workers' basic social and economic gains, their benefits, and their jobs.

This assault was carried out with the complicity of the union apparatus. It has been implemented not only by Erdoğan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) government but also with the open or tacit support of the entire political establishment—including the "opposition" Republican People's Party (CHP), which endorsed sweeping deregulation and privatization.

The Polyak miners' direct confrontation with the state's security forces, and their discussion of running not only the mine but the country itself, raises the critical question of which class should rule society. The rule of the capitalist class has been a complete failure in terms of the social welfare of the overwhelming majority of the population. It is essential to seize the power and ill-gotten wealth of the ruling class to meet the basic social, economic, democratic, and cultural needs of working people.

Transforming militant class battles into lasting gains means expanding the struggle against the major corporations and the state apparatus at their service, nationwide and internationally, with the aim of transferring power to the working class.

Lehman's call for solidarity makes clear what instrument Turkish workers must build to forge unity in struggle with their class brothers and sisters in the US and around the world based on a revolutionary international strategy: "Corporations operate globally. Our response must also be global. This means building the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) to coordinate our struggles across national borders."



To contact the WSWWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://www.wsws.org/contact)**