UAW issues statement of phony support for Mexican tire workers shot on picket line

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On February 23, 2026, over 1,000 workers at the Tornel Rubber Company in Mexico City and the State of Mexico launched a strike across four plants demanding enforcement of the Mexican Rubber Industry Contract-Law. This statute includes a 40-hour workweek, an unpaid 44-day year-end bonus, proper vacation premiums (25-31 days), social security contributions, and recognition of official holidays. The union is also demanding 7 and 5 percent salary increases corresponding to 2025 and 2026.

Owned by Indian multinational JK Tyre & Industries—part of the 125-year-old JK Organisation conglomerate with operations in 105 countries and 12 plants producing 35 million tires annually—Tornel exemplifies the ruthless exploitation of transnational corporations.

On March 18, uniformed and armed company thugs wielding bats, knives, rods and firearms attacked night-shift pickets at the Tultitlán plant, shooting four workers in the legs. Workers managed to detain two of the attackers and hand them over to the authorities.

Four days later, on March 22, workers bravely voted to ratify the strike with 833 votes in favor and 113 against.

The United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States issued a March 24 statement condemning the shooting of the Tornel workers as “a grave attack on fundamental labor and human rights.” It detailed the grievances, demanded protection for workers and enforcement of the contract, calling for a USMCA Rapid Response Labor Mechanism complaint to be initiated by the US Trade Representative (USTR).

The UAW statement also urges the Mexican authorities and industry leaders to publicly condemn the attack.

UAW President Shawn Fain declared, “What happened at Tornel Rubber is an outrage. It’s an attack on human rights, on labor rights. ... We’re committed to fighting like hell.”

The entire statement is a grotesque fraud.

The UAW is a corrupt apparatus that has overseen decades of deindustrialization and betrayals. It has seen its membership plummet from over 1.5 million in the 1970s to under 400,000 today, even as the bureaucracy has enriched itself off the betrayals that handed concessions to the auto giants.

Its appeal to the US, Mexico, Canada (USMCA) trade deal mechanism is bankrupt. This strategy has already failed at Tornel with a 2024 complaint on the contract violations that yielded no results. Now, it petitions Trump’s Labor Department—an administration waging war crimes in the Middle East and Latin America—to intervene on behalf of “labor rights.”

The UAW has long pitted US workers against their class brothers. In 1982, amid anti-Japanese hysteria stoked by UAW and Democratic officials blaming “foreign” workers for job losses, Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American celebrating his upcoming wedding, was beaten to death with a baseball bat by a Chrysler plant superintendent and his unemployed stepson. The UAW never apologized for fueling this racist violence.

The appeal to a government composed of the super-rich is absurd, but it is not an exception for the UAW. Shawn Fain is a cheerleader for Trump’s global tariffs, including those against Mexico, scapegoating Mexican workers as job-stealers. Last year, Fain reemphasized UAW support for tariffs amid mass protests against Trump’s drive to dictatorship, remaining silent on ICE raids targeting immigrant workers and the Marines deployment to Los Angeles.

The UAW explicitly pits US autoworkers against Mexicans, echoing Trump and pseudo-left figures like

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Bernie Sanders who peddle the lie that immigrants take "American jobs."

Just like the USMCA launched during his first administration, Trump's tariffs are designed to reorganize supply chains for war against China, Iran, and Russia—not to defend jobs. Meanwhile, Fain denounces foreign workers and touts the UAW's role in World War II, which involved shifting auto plants into the production of the "arsenal of democracy" and suppressing strikes.

Its statement on Tornel, attempting to channel the struggle behind a USMCA appeal, is equally aimed at proving the UAW's utility to the ruling class in policing the "home front," now encompassing the "Greater North America" proposed by the Trump administration.

At Tornel, there has been a protracted cycle of betrayals. In 2008, workers ousted the hated Confederation of Mexican Workers (CTM) gangsters, who were replaced by the Independent Union of Tornel Workers, affiliated to the US-backed Union of National Workers (UNT) and IndustriALL, tied to Germany's union bureaucracy.

In 2017, the new "independent and democratic union," signed an agreement with the company behind workers' backs to eliminate 1,200–1,400 jobs via a sellout deal, closing three plants amid protests.

Workers then replaced the UNT with the current National Union of Tornel Workers (SINTCHT), which has equally proved to be oriented not only to the Mexican capitalist state, but US imperialism. In December 2024, it launched a USMCA Rapid Response Labor Mechanism, which ruled in favor of the union and led the Mexican government to acknowledge violations of contract law. However, neither government did anything once the company refused to change its systematic violation of labor rights.

During the current strike, the SINTCHT has focused on appealing again to the Morena party government to intervene, while leaning on the same network of US-backed "independent unions" for political support. While joining a "festival of solidarity" last month and providing some material support to workers on the picket line, these unions have not moved a finger to expand the struggle within or outside Mexico.

It is worth adding that IndustriALL's global federation plays a similar role. JK Tyre's Indian workers struck three times from 2017–2022 (for union recognition, COVID safety, and then wages), with the local union affiliated to both the Stalinist-led CITU and IndustriALL. Now IndustriALL has refused to mobilize workers in India in support of their Mexican counterparts.

This endless replacement of one pro-capitalist union with another—CTM gangsters to "independent" union agents of US imperialism—must end.

Tornel workers must reject all traps facilitated by the US union apparatus and its partners in Mexico. Instead, workers in Mexico must fight to free themselves from all the union bureaucracies and establish rank-and-file committees to take control of the strike and expand it.

The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) and the campaign for Will Lehman for UAW President seek to provide the framework to coordinate genuine cross-border struggles against transnationals like JK Tyre.

Only workers' control of production—uniting Mexican, US and Canadian autoworkers, as well as JK Indian tire makers and beyond—can defend jobs, wages and rights against global capitalist exploitation, war and dictatorship.

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