To all workers at Bosch in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Germany: Your struggle is the struggle of all workers. Build an action committee!

Ulrich Rippert, Dietmar Gaisenkersting, K. Nesan
18 May 2026

The following is a statement addressed to workers at German auto parts maker Bosch, which has laid out plans to cut 22,000 jobs. Many of these jobs are being cut in the city of Schwäbisch Gmünd in the state of Baden-Württemberg, the main hub for its automotive steering division.

Dear colleagues,

Schwäbisch Gmünd faces social devastation. More than half of your jobs are to be destroyed. This is no local misfortune and no unavoidable fate. It is the consequence of the goal set by Bosch CEO Stefan Hartung: to double profits from €3.5 billion to at least €7 billion – within two years. The jobs massacre at your plant is not an expression of economic distress, but the instrument of ruthless profit maximisation on the backs of the workers.

The IG Metall union: An accomplice, not a defender

Many of you have experienced it yourselves: The IG Metall apparatus and works council it dominates are not on your side. They stand on the side of the corporation.

After the announcement of 22,000 dismissals, chairman of the Bosch Mobility division general works council Frank Sell declared he had "full understanding" for the difficult situation. Since then, functionaries from the IG Metall union and works council reps at all locations have been labouring to enforce these cuts.

They constantly claim there is no alternative. In Waiblingen, where the 70-year-old plant is being completely closed, with 560 people losing their jobs, works council member Stefano Mazzei declared the result was "acceptable under the given economic conditions". And in Schwäbisch Gmünd itself, the IG Metall claims that the cutting of 1,150 positions represents a "rescue" of 150 jobs because Bosch had originally demanded 1,300.

This is the language of management consultants in trade union jackets.

In Schwäbisch Gmünd, more than 200 workers – mainly from production – rebelled against this course and, under Mustafa Simsek, set up their own slate for the works council election, the "Free Metalworkers." The massive dissatisfaction with the IG Metall was directed towards the official list of the IG Metall led by Yakup Varol.

The union apparatus reacted with the methods of a mafia boss. The election committee, handpicked by the IG Metall under Hakan Birlik, refused to certify the 89-person slate. Its candidates were put under pressure in individual conversations with works council members, the election committee and even supervisors. Simsek was summoned to personnel interviews without any reasons being given. The corporation is also taking action against him under employment law.

The union bureaucrats under Claudio Bellomo and Andreas Reimer have maintained domination in the works council with the help of their own "slate," in order to be able to enforce the necessary attacks against you.

Reimer and Bellomo are also using all means to fight against the legal challenge to the works council election. After the application for an interim injunction to stop the works council election, the Aalen Labour Court under Judge Görke has made clear that the legal challenge to the election could take a long time, possibly until after the closure of most of the plant.

The brutal actions of the IG Metall apparatus are not a sign of strength. They are a sign of fear. The bureaucracy knows that if its control is broken in even just one workplace, resistance can spread like wildfire.

You are not aloneand that is decisive

What is happening in Schwäbisch Gmünd is happening everywhere. At Bosch in Feuerbach, Schwieberdingen, Bühl, Waiblingen and Homburg, thousands of jobs are being destroyed just as they are at VW, Ford, Schaeffler and numerous other corporations. And the same pretence is taking place everywhere: Management announces job cuts, IG Metall protests for the media, but then negotiates to carry out the cuts in a "socially acceptable" form.

But resistance is growing. When Sozialistische Gleichheitspartei (Socialist Equality Party, SGP) members spoke with shift workers outside the gates of Bosch plants in Schwäbisch Gmünd, Feuerbach, Schwieberdingen and Waiblingen in recent weeks, anger at the IG Metall was palpable everywhere. Many – union members and non-

© World Socialist Web Site

members alike – support the building of independent rank-and-file action committees.

Other Bosch workers had not heard anything about events in Schwäbisch Gmünd because the union apparatus does everything to prevent the exchange of information between the different locations. That is its decisive means of control: Divide and rule. Play one workforce off against another, location against location, country against country.

And exactly here lies your strength, if you recognise it: The workers in Feuerbach, in Waiblingen, in Reutlingen – and colleagues at Bosch plants in Bursa, in Turkey, in Maklár in Hungary, in the US and in China – are not your competitors. They are your allies. They are fighting the same corporate management, the same profit logic, the same trade union betrayals.

What is to be done now—concretely

Defence of your jobs against the corporation, IG Metall apparatus and works council cannot be left to the courts. It must be taken into your own hands. For this, an independent rank-and-file action committee must be built—democratically organised, controlled by the workforce, not by the trade union bureaucracy and its henchmen in the works council.

Such an action committee must establish the defence of all jobs as an immovable basic principle—without ifs and buts. It is not the corporation's cash position, nor its competitiveness on the world market that should determine whether you will still have work tomorrow. That must be decided by the organised struggle of the workforce.

Concretely, the action committee can immediately initiate the following steps:

- Defend Mustafa Simsek and all others targeted for repression by the trade union apparatus, the works council and the Bosch corporation.
- Hold assemblies (information events) at which the works council must answer questions.
- Establish connections with the Bosch workforce in Feuerbach, Reutlingen and Waiblingen—against the isolation consciously pursued by the IG Metall apparatus.
- Make contact with colleagues at the Bosch plant in Bursa, Turkey and in Maklár, Hungary. Issue joint declarations and hold joint meetings.
- Affiliate the action committee to the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which coordinates workplace struggles worldwide across industries; extend invitations to autoworkers from all over the world to information and discussion events.

The WSWS will accompany you in every step of this struggle openly, make it known and spread it internationally—so that Schwäbisch Gmünd does not remain hidden away, but becomes a signal for all!

The decisive question: Who determines production?

The central question that the action committee must ask is: Who decides what is produced and who has work—the shareholders and speculators, or the workers who make and create everything?

The jobs massacre initiated at Bosch must therefore be seen within a broader political context. It is a component of the deep worldwide crisis of the capitalist system. The bitter struggle for sales markets and raw materials has, as in the First and Second World Wars, once again taken the form of violent military conflicts. This is the reason for the wars that the US and European powers are waging against Russia and against Iran, and their war preparations against China.

This is not about "freedom" or "democracy", which have themselves become targets of the respective governments in the US and Europe. Governments under Trump, Merz, Starmer and Macron want to control the energy resources of the Middle East and the raw materials of Russia in order to dominate the world economy and blackmail their rivals. The imperialist powers are fighting for the redivision of the world and are prepared to plunge all of humanity into barbarism and death for this.

Workers and their families are supposed to bear the costs of war, not only through job cuts and wage reductions but also through cuts to health and long-term care provisions, pensions and unemployment benefits, and through the running down of public infrastructure—education, public transport, energy supply, etc. We are already paying the bill for rearmament and wars through increased prices.

The struggle to defend jobs can therefore only be won if it is guided by a perspective that places workers' social needs above the profit gouging of the corporation and which becomes the starting point of an international struggle against capitalism and war.

The right to work is a fundamental right. It must stand higher than the profit strivings of major shareholders. A corporation like Bosch, which was built up by your labour over decades and has raked in billions in profits, has no right to decide on your future and that of your families like some balance sheet item.

The answer to the current attacks is not a different works council, which would then be called upon, according to the Works Constitution Act, to negotiate "socially acceptable" cuts with management. The answer is the democratic control of production by workers themselves—and a struggle that takes this demand as its starting point.

Get in touch! Contact us via WhatsApp: +49 163 337 8340, or fill out the form. We assure you of absolute confidentiality.

To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact

© World Socialist Web Site