

Workers in Türkiye defend Will Lehman against death threat from top UAW official

Our reporters
6 August 2026

Workers and young people in Türkiye have sent letters to the *World Socialist Web Site* condemning the death threat made on social media against Will Lehman, a Mack Trucks worker in the United States, by Raymond L. Jensen Jr., a high-ranking official of the United Auto Workers (UAW).

Lehman, a socialist autoworker, is standing in the presidential election of the UAW, a union with more than one million members, on a platform that challenges the union bureaucracy and calls for the transfer of power to the rank and file.

On Lehman's public Facebook campaign page, Jensen posted an AI-generated image depicting him tied up, gagged, and bleeding from the mouth, with a masked man pointing an automatic rifle at his back.

After Lehman and his attorneys brought the threat before the court-appointed UAW Monitor, Jensen was stripped of his union membership for two years and barred for life from holding office in the union on August 4. He must also apologize to Lehman. This significant victory for the working class is the product of solidarity statements in Lehman's defense made by workers and young people around the world — in the United States, and from Canada to Mexico, from Britain to Australia and New Zealand.

The letters of solidarity below were delivered before the Monitor's ruling.

A factory worker from Adana wrote:

Greetings to Comrade Will Lehman, who is standing for the presidency of the United Auto Workers (UAW) in the United States. I condemn the death threat made against him, and the UAW leadership that has turned a blind eye to it. I support the statement of the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees, "Oppose the death threat against UAW presidential candidate Will Lehman!"

This threat has not been made against Will Lehman alone. It is a threat against every worker who speaks out against the union bureaucracy's deception of the working class and who points to a way that genuinely leads forward.

Will's fight points workers in the right direction. Installing different names at the head of the unions will achieve nothing. This has been tried again and again all over the world and it has not worked. Workers must build their own organizations from below and do away with the union bureaucracy. We must raise a socialist struggle

against capitalism.

This perspective frightens the ruling class, and it frightens the union bureaucrats who have been transformed into the guardians of the working class just as much. That is why they threaten us.

Throughout its history the working class has confronted violence repeatedly, and countless workers' leaders around the world have lost their lives. But taking a step back out of fear will not change that. On the contrary, the working class must enter struggle to defend itself, to put an end to capitalism and establish socialism.

We have to build our rank-and-file committees everywhere and unite our struggle on a global scale.

A retiree from Balıkesir stated:

It is utterly unacceptable that Will Lehman, a candidate for the presidency of the United Auto Workers in the US, has been threatened with death on social media by a union bureaucrat named Raymond L. Jensen Jr. This threat is plainly intended to silence the working-class movement that is developing from below, both in the US and internationally. I oppose this threat, the intimidation it is meant to convey and the incitement to violence at which it is aimed. I support the call for unconditional condemnation issued by the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) on July 21, 2026.

I also demand that the UAW publicly repudiate this threat and that the union bureaucrat Jensen offer an unambiguous apology to Lehman and to the IWA-RFC.

An unemployed youth from Mersin wrote:

The death threat made against Will Lehman is totally unacceptable, and I condemn it in the strongest terms. A determined fight must be waged against the targeting of a worker simply because he refused to bow to the union bureaucracy and defended the democratic rights of the rank and file. This is in reality an attempt to intimidate every

worker who stands up for their rights and makes their voice heard. The best answer to these efforts at intimidation is to give no ground and to build the fight for rank-and-file committees still further.

A software worker from Antalya stated:

When we workers learned what had been done to Will Lehman, we were sickened. If an official of the union bureaucracy can go so far as to post an image showing Lehman gagged, covered in blood and held at gunpoint, then this is no longer a war against one individual but against every worker who opposes collaboration with the bosses.

What they are trying to intimidate is, in reality, the response that Lehman's program has found among workers. This threat shows how desperate and how cowardly they are.

I stand in solidarity with Will Lehman. We will not submit to this intimidation.

A municipal worker from Istanbul wrote:

I find the death threat against Will Lehman alarming and unacceptable. That anyone should be threatened because of their trade union struggle, their political views or their defense of workers' rights must never be normalized. I hold that differences of opinion must be debated openly and democratically, not settled through violence and intimidation. I condemn this threat and want to state that I stand in solidarity with Lehman.

A graduate student from Istanbul stated:

The measure of a democratic society is not elections alone; it is the existence of conditions in which people can speak, organize and fight for their rights without fear.

For that reason, I regard the death threat against Will Lehman not simply as an attack directed at one individual, but as a threat to democratic rights and freedom of expression, and I want to stress that I stand with Lehman to the end in the face of this threat.

Following the death threat against Lehman, the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi – Dördüncü Enternasyonal (Socialist Equality Party – Fourth International) sent a letter to political parties and trade unions in Türkiye that describe themselves as “democratic,” “socialist” or “progressive,” calling on them to publicly condemn the death threat and to defend Lehman. This call — to publicly

condemn the fact that a socialist worker leading a campaign of such importance at the very center of world imperialism, on behalf not only of the American but of the entire international workers' movement, has been threatened with death by a union bureaucrat — was met with silence, with the sole exception of the Workers' Democracy Party (?DP), the Turkish section of the Morenoite International Workers' Unity – Fourth International (IWU-FI or UIT-CI).

The ?DP stated the following in a post on social media:

Socialist autoworker Will Lehman has been threatened with death on social media by a union bureaucrat named Raymond L. Jensen.

Will Lehman is a worker at the Mack Trucks plant in the US and a candidate for the presidency of the United Auto Workers (UAW). The reason Lehman has received a death threat is that he is standing for the UAW presidency. We reject the bureaucratic practices of the union bureaucracies everywhere, which are alien to workers' democracy and which exclude and suppress the right of workers to a say and to a decision. We express once again our support for all militant unions and workers. We condemn the death threat against Will Lehman, made to cow and intimidate.

We defend workers' democracy in every union and we fight for it. We express our support for Will Lehman as part of this class-based, militant conception of trade union struggle.

Lehman's campaign for the UAW presidency is of great significance for, and sets an example to, the struggles of workers who—in Türkiye as in other countries—are increasingly beginning to move independently of and against the union apparatus. In July the Sosyalist E?itlik Partisi published a pamphlet titled *Abolish the Union Bureaucracy, Transfer Power to the Rank and File*, bringing together a range of statements and articles on this campaign.

As the pamphlet states, “What is at stake is not an ordinary union election in the United States, but an answer to the fundamental strategic questions confronting workers in Türkiye and across the world.” We call on all our readers to study this pamphlet, to share it with their colleagues and on social media, and to discuss it with us.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact