

Miners in Ankara demanding what they are owed defy police repression

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The struggle waged in Ankara since August 10 by workers at Eti Gümü? and Doruk Madencilik, both owned by Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding, over wages, severance pay and other benefits that have gone unpaid for months, is continuing in defiance of mounting state repression.

In the space of a single week, more than a hundred miners and officials of the Ba??ms?z Maden-?? (Independent Miners' Union) have been subjected to four separate waves of detention. Demonstrations have been banned in the capital, the wives of workers have been taken into custody, and union officials have been threatened with arrest.

Part of the wages of the Eti Gümü? workers in Elaz?? has gone unpaid since November 2024, and of the Doruk workers in Eski?ehir for even longer. The bulk of the workers were placed on compulsory unpaid leave from April 2025 onwards. A report by inspectors from the Ministry of Labor established that this practice was illegal and that all wages, together with severance and notice pay, owed since 2022 must be paid. These reports did nothing to halt the theft of workers' entitlements.

On the morning of August 10, workers employed at Eti Gümü? and Doruk Madencilik tried to make a public statement in front of the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources. They were surrounded by police the moment they emerged from the metro station. More than 100 were detained, among them Gökay Çak?r, general president of the rank-and-file union Ba??ms?z Maden-??.

The following day, the Ankara Governor's Office declared a 15-day ban on demonstrations across the city. The workers refused to recognise the ban. On August 13, the fourth day of the protest, 82 workers were detained along with Çak?r and the union's

organising specialist, Ba?aran Aksu. Two miners lost consciousness due to the violent police assault and were taken to hospital. Lütfi Sabri Bat?, the union's lawyer, stated that the miners were denied access to their medication for hours.

The 82 workers were released after 48 hours. Aksu, charged with "inciting the public to hatred and enmity," was released under judicial supervision.

The next day, the wives of the miners, who were waiting at Akköprü metro station, were detained. According to lawyer Bat?, this was because the workers had announced that they would send a delegation to the rally marking the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), which President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an was due to attend.

On Sunday, August 16, the holding company issued a statement on social media claiming that payments had been made and that a substantial part of its past obligations had been met. The statement asserted that Türkiye Maden-??, affiliated to the Türk-?? confederation, is the officially recognised union, and that Ba??ms?z Maden-?? was misleading and provoking the public. The holding company, which has the government behind it, insisted that the workers' protests were unlawful and called on the state to investigate "the organisation and the connections in the background of this process."

This statement is an admission that the workers are being robbed of what they are owed through the collaboration of the company, the union bureaucracy and the Erdo?an government, and that their democratic struggle is being suppressed with police-state methods. While the workers continued their protests, Çak?r and Aksu were detained once again, the day after they were singled out, and later released on judicial supervision.

Workers at all workplaces must demand an end to the repression and arbitrary detentions faced by the miners, and that the miners' demands be met immediately.

Türkiye Maden-??, which the company presents as the officially recognised union, has for years not merely kept silent as workers were stripped of their rights; it has actively collaborated with the company throughout.

Earlier this year, a section of Doruk Madencilik workers had already waged a struggle for the wages and entitlements owed to them, under the leadership of Ba??ms?z Maden-??. Those workers, who marched some 190 kilometres from Eski?ehir to Ankara, were detained. The struggle was finally ended when the ministry and the company gave an undertaking to pay. When no payments followed, the workers came to Ankara once again, and only then, at the beginning of June, was everything they were owed paid out.

A separate protocol was signed on June 15-16, under the supervision of the Ministry of Labor, covering the other Doruk Madencilik workers, who are members of Türkiye Maden-??. When these payments too failed to materialise, the workers began protests in Ankara in July.

The theft of workers' wages and other entitlements at the mines and enterprises belonging to Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding is part of a systematic policy. The holding company, which has secured countless mineral exploration licences from the state, is able to act in this way because it faces no sanction whatsoever when it does not pay wages.

According to a report by the journalist Bahad?r Özgür on *Halk TV*, Sabahattin Y?ld?z, the owner of a holding company built up over many years with government incentives, holds 2,364 mining licences. At the same time, workers in the group's numerous factories, spread across different provinces, enterprises and sectors, are being robbed of their rights.

Ba??ms?z Maden-?? stated the following in its August 10 declaration: "The holding company has turned the workers' unpaid entitlements into an instrument of its own financing. Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding has robbed workers, the population, small tradespeople and municipalities at its Nesko, Doruk, Yunus Emre Termik, Eti Gümü?, Y?ld?z Bak?r, KMK Madencilik, Sö?üt Seramik, OEDA? and Kay Süt operations the length and breadth of the country, and

every ministry, above all the Ministry of Energy, has allowed it to do so."

The transfer of the Yunus Emre Thermal Power Plant in Eski?ehir to Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding was likewise a product of collaboration between the government and the company.

Following the failed coup attempt of July 15, 2016, the plant was seized by the government and a trustee was appointed. It was run for years by the Savings Deposit Insurance Fund (TMSF) and was handed over to Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding in December 2022. Hundreds of energy workers employed at the plant began a march to Ankara on July 21 to demand the money owed to them, under the leadership of Enerji-Sen. The police detained two union officials during the march. The protests ended once a portion of the money owed had been paid.

All these injustices across the various enterprises of the holding company are not the work of one "bad boss" or the negligence of a single ministry. They are the real face of the capitalist order—in which the interests of capital and profit come before everything else—and of the state apparatus that defends it. The theft of workers' entitlements, the bans on demonstrations, the police attacks and the broken promises are all part of an intensifying class war.

What workers need is an independent and unified struggle, led by rank-and-file committees and cutting across all divisions of country, city, enterprise, sector and union. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is fighting to put an end to the division of the working class by the trade union bureaucracies and to unify the struggles of workers on a global scale. We call on all workers to build rank-and-file committees in their workplaces and to take up active solidarity with the miners.



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