

Factory occupation against union-related layoffs at Smart Solar in Türkiye

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Workers at the Smart Solar Technologies factory in the Alia?a district of ?zmir, Türkiye, halted production on the evening of Friday, September 11, and refused to leave the plant for four days.

The action was sparked by the firing of seven of the roughly 570 workers who had resigned on mass from the Türkiye Energy, Water and Gas Workers Union (TES-??), affiliated with the Türk-?? confederation, and joined the Energy Workers Union (Enerji-Sen), affiliated with the D?SK confederation. The company carried out the dismissals on the pretext of “departmental surplus.” The protest ended on the evening of September 14 with an agreement reached with the company.

The struggle of the Smart workers is part of the growing wave of workers’ struggles and wildcat strikes in Türkiye against wages eroded by inflation, the stripping away of rights and attacks on the right to organize. Workers are beginning to act both against the companies and against the union bureaucracies that function as their appendages.

At the Alia?a plant, as for countless other unionized workers, anger had been building over the years at the complicity of the TES-?? bureaucracy in the erosion of social conditions. The last straw was the failure to pay the wage increase due in July 2026 under the current collective bargaining agreement. On September 10, the workers completed the process of resigning from TES-?? and joined Enerji-Sen.

The company responded by summoning the seven workers who had spearheaded the organizing drive to the human resources department on their weekly day off and firing them. The workers answered this attack and the non-payment of their wages by collectively shutting down production.

“We changed unions, and then the process began between the yellow [pro-company] union and the employer,” one worker told the newspaper *Evrensel*. “What led us to launch the action was that they fired

seven of our co-workers on trumped-up grounds.” While workers on the 4 p.m. to midnight shift remained inside the factory, those on the other shifts kept vigil at the gates. On September 12, Enerji-Sen held a mass press conference in front of the factory attended by hundreds of workers.

In messages sent to the workers, the company announced that it had cancelled the night and day shifts and was treating the workers as being on “administrative leave.” It was also taking steps to shift production from its Alia?a and Gebze plants to contract manufacturing facilities in Central Anatolia and to OEM factories in the United States.

In a statement on the evening of September 14, Enerji-Sen announced that an agreement had been reached with the company with the approval of the workers. Under its terms, the inflation adjustment, unpaid for two months, will be paid; no disciplinary investigations will be opened against workers over the protest; and no one will be subjected to workplace harassment because of the change of union. As for the seven fired workers, the statement said that “a solution acceptable to the parties” would be sought within ten days beginning September 16.

After the protest ended, company management, in a statement to the Public Disclosure Platform (KAP), again claimed that the dismissed workers had been let go because they had failed to demonstrate “performance and adaptation.” This, together with the uncertainty surrounding the fate of the seven workers, underscores that Smart’s retreat is only temporary.

The reinstatement of the victimized militants—not their dismissal with statutory severance pay—and the improvement of wages and working conditions can be achieved only by preserving and strengthening the collective unity the workers displayed when they halted production. This, in turn, requires the unification and coordination of struggles through rank-and-file

committees, both between the Alia?a and Gebze plants and with workers at other factories.

At the company's other factory in Gebze district of Kocaeli, 260 workers who are members of the D?SK-affiliated United Metal Workers Union (Birle?ik Metal-??) went on a strike lasting 114 days in October 2025. They won the reinstatement of 44 workers who had been fired for opposing strike-breaking, as well as an average wage increase of 50 percent.

The most important allies of the Smart Solar workers are their class brothers and sisters, across all divisions of workplace, industry, union and even country. The company's threat to shift production to contractors or to other countries and to close the factory underscores that this struggle cannot be advanced based on a single workplace or within a national framework.

The militant struggle of the Smart Solar workers is one of the most combative examples of the workers' struggles that have recently been developing from the rank-and-file.

In January, some 5,000 workers at Migros warehouses in seven provinces took wildcat strike action against the imposition of a meagre wage increase, led by the rank-and-file union DGD-SEN. Since March, miners led by the Independent Mine Workers Union (Ba??ms?z Maden-??) have waged struggles over unpaid wages and severance pay. Despite being detained repeatedly, more than 100 miners in Ankara brought their demands, and the class struggle, onto the national agenda. Teachers employed in the private sector, along with those affected by the interview process, have sustained a determined protest in Ankara in defiance of police violence.

While these struggles have won full or partial gains, workers in many other parts of the country are continuing to take action over rights that have been stolen from them. Workers fired from ?ZENERJ?, a company owned by the ?zmir Metropolitan Municipality (?zBB), are continuing their protest outside the workplace. In Samsun, workers are protesting in front of the Atakum Municipality to demand payment of five months of back wages. In Yozgat, workers at the Rasih and ?hsan facilities of Y?ld?zlar SSS Holding walked off the job on Saturday after going four months without pay. In Bursa, workers at AKSA Bursagaz who are members of Enerji-Sen have been fighting for 100 days for the reinstatement of fired workers and recognition of the union's collective bargaining authority.

These actions express mounting opposition to the brutal austerity offensive of President Recep Tayyip Erdo?an's government. In the interests of the capitalist oligarchy, the

government is impoverishing the working class and effectively abolishing its most basic rights, including the right to be paid, to strike and to organize.

In August, annual inflation stood at 31.51 percent according to the unreliable figures of the Turkish Statistical Institute (TurkStat), and at 49.03 percent according to the independent Inflation Research Group (ENAG). The government, by contrast, raised the minimum wage for 2026 by just 27 percent, holding it at a net 28,075 lira a month. According to the latest calculation by T?rk-??, the hunger line for a family of four has risen to 37,388 lira and the poverty line to 121,786 lira.

Under these conditions, the government is no longer able to suppress class tensions without resorting to police-state measures. That is why this year hundreds of workers, above all warehouse workers, miners and teachers, have been repeatedly detained and unlawful bans on protests imposed. Ba??ms?z Maden-?? President Gökay Çak?r and Ba?aran Aksu have been repeatedly detained and jailed. Most recently, this has been compounded by a sweeping wave of detentions and censorship targeting left-wing organizations and LGBT+ associations on the pretext of "protecting the family."

In the face of these attacks on social and democratic rights, the way forward is to build rank-and-file committees in workplaces, neighbourhoods and schools and to develop a united resistance and counteroffensive of the working class. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) is fighting to unite these struggles in T?rkiye and internationally. We call on all workers who are entering into struggle to contact us today.



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