

Five miners killed in Soma, site of Türkiye's 2014 mining disaster

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Five miners were killed and two others were rescued injured on 1 October when a roof collapsed in an underground coal mine operated by ?mbat Madencilik in the Soma district of Manisa province, western Türkiye.

All of the dead—Ramazan ?nce (26), Halit Ersay (37), Kerim Ören (37), Ömer Karakaya (34) and ?sa Olcay (49)—were members of the Independent Miners Union (Ba??ms?z Maden-??). ?sa Olcay, who had returned to the mine because he could not make ends meet on his pension, worked in the same mine as his son. Mass marches and funerals were held for the workers. The miners' deaths were protested in many cities, including Istanbul and Ankara. In Istanbul, police detained protesters with brutal violence.

This new catastrophe, in the mining basin where the 2014 massacre claimed the lives of 301 miners, is neither an “accident” nor “fate.” These deaths are the product of the profit system, in which production is pushed forward under dangerous conditions, inspections are a formality and profit is placed above human life.

Miners and their families cannot rely on the company, the state or the bureaucracy of the Turkish Mine Workers Union (Türkiye Maden-??), which collaborates with them, to hold all those responsible to account. It is an urgent necessity for the miners to launch an independent workers' inquiry through rank-and-file committees elected by themselves, with the support of experts they trust, and to seek to mobilise the support of the broadest sections of the working class. The findings must be made public. The miners must exercise, through their own committees, the right to stop work wherever they see danger.

The Evaluation Board set up by the rank-and-file union Ba??ms?z Maden-??, together with miners who

survived the collapse, technicians and engineers, represents a step in this direction. According to the board, the collapse took place in the development roadway of the East-5 panel, which had not yet entered production. The company wanted to bring East-5 into production as quickly as possible to replace East-3, which had been closed due to a fire. To move equipment by monorail, it had the floor of the tunnel dug out. The ground beneath the roof-support props was excavated, the props were not set deep enough into the floor, and proper clamps were not used on the central props. According to the statement, it was known three days before the collapse that the faces were dangerous.

A worker who was in the mine at the time of the collapse told *soL Haber* that the support sets gave way while 18-tonne conveyor pans were being moved through by monorail. “This is negligence, this is murder,” he said. A former ?mbat worker reported that the company was notified of official inspections weeks in advance. As a result, risky areas were covered with tarpaulins, and work resumed as soon as the inspectors left.

Ba??ms?z Maden-?? stated that the mine had been inspected two days before the collapse, and that a previously closed panel was reopened afterwards. Nine company officials, including the general manager, were detained. However, past experience shows that such detentions are carried out to defuse the initial public outrage. As the union's statement put it: “There is never any effective state inspection. The bosses are never punished by the judiciary. Inspection is practically under the control of the holding companies.”

With some 4,200 workers, the ?mbat mine is one of Türkiye's largest private mining operations. It owes its rise to taking over the Soma-Eynez field of Turkish

Coal Enterprises (TK?) under a royalty (rödovals) agreement. After coal purchases stopped because the Soma B Thermal Power Plant could not pay its debt to TK?, the company announced that it had closed 2025 with a loss. This situation was used as a pretext for paying wages irregularly for more than a year and a half. Yet, as *Evrensel* noted, the company, which has been among Türkiye's 500 largest industrial enterprises for the past three years, made a profit of around 650 million lira in 2024 and, thanks to various exemptions, paid no tax at all.

According to press reports, at least nine miners had already lost their lives in ?mbat Madencilik's mines since 2014. Three of them died in a collapse in April 2020. According to a miner who worked there at the time, work was not stopped despite a warning from the occupational safety specialist. The person held responsible was promoted to shift supervisor after a short prison term.

These deaths are part of the rising toll of workplace killings in Türkiye. According to the latest report of the Health and Safety Labour Watch (?S?G), at least 226 workers were killed in workplace homicides in August alone, and at least 1,509 in the first eight months of 2026. ?S?G notes that, for the first time in 15 years, it has recorded more than 200 deaths for four consecutive months.

Since the 2014 Soma massacre, 18 miners have died in Ermenek, 16 in ?irvan, 43 in Amasra and 9 in ?liç. The Soma trial shows why these disasters do not stop. Of the 51 defendants, 37 were acquitted. The company's chairman of the board, Can Gürkan, was released in 2019. Since 2021, not a single defendant has remained in prison, and no senior official has been punished. Meanwhile, Can Atalay and Selçuk Koza?açl?, the lawyers for the miners' families, are still imprisoned in various political cases. This impunity encourages companies to impose working conditions that disregard workers' safety and lives.

Roof support, ventilation and a safe pace of work are regarded by companies as cost items. The state, which has handed the mines over to capital through privatisation and royalty agreements, conducts vital inspections as a mere formality. The "authorised" union apparatus, which functions as an extension of the company, remains silent and is thus complicit in preventable accidents and deaths.

The carnage in the mines is an international phenomenon. As the *World Socialist Web Site* noted in May, although mining employs only about 1 percent of the global workforce, it accounts for more than 8 percent of all fatal workplace accidents. This year, 82 workers were killed in a coal mine in China's Shanxi province, and more than 600 in the Rubaya mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

At the same time, a rank-and-file movement is developing against these dangerous conditions in the mines and against unpaid wages. In March, the Polyak miners broke through a barricade and seized the mine. In April, the march by Doruk Madencilik workers from Eski?ehir to Ankara to demand what they were owed placed the miners' struggle on the national agenda. In August, the Eti Gümü? and Doruk miners held out in defiance of a protest ban and waves of detentions.

The fact that workers are forced to work, and die, under dangerous conditions testifies to the bankruptcy of the capitalist system. Today's immense level of scientific and technological development makes it possible to organise production and supply chains on a world scale, under the democratic control of the working class, without endangering the safety of any worker. For workplace killings to end, the decaying capitalist profit and nation-state system must give way to a world socialist society.



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