

Smart Solar fires over 80 after wildcat strike in Türkiye

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Workers at the Smart Solar (Güneş) Technologies factory are completing the second week of their fight against the firing of over 80 of their coworkers. Smart Solar is one of Türkiye's leading solar panel manufacturers, and the factory is in Aliağa, an industrial district of İzmir. The workers are fighting for their unpaid wages and for the right to choose their own union.

Workers resigned en masse from TES-İS, a union affiliated with the pro-government Türk-İS confederation that had collaborated with management for years, and joined DİSK-affiliated Enerji-Sen. They made the move after the company failed to pay the inflation raise that was due in July under the contract.

In September, the company fired seven workers who had led the break from the openly pro-company union, using the pretext of "departmental surplus." Some 570 workers at the factory responded by halting production on September 11, and they refused to leave the factory for four days. The action ended after management told Enerji-Sen officials in a meeting that it would pay the accumulated wages and "seek a solution" for the fired workers. But Smart's management broke its word. The seven workers were not reinstated and the back pay was not paid.

Enerji-Sen members then set up a protest tent in front of the factory on October 7, and the company responded with mass layoffs. According to a statement by Enerji-Sen, before the protest resumed the management had made the following offer: The seven fired workers would get two months' gross wages on top of their severance and notice pay, and they would not be taken back. Other workers would be paid the inflation raise, withheld since July, in 12 installments starting in January, and the inflation raise due next January would be paid a year late. Workers rejected this offer. The company then declared a 10-day production stoppage to crush the struggle.

When the stoppage ended on October 19, workers who

had not been fired returned to their jobs. The company then tried to force them to sign a pledge on "occupational health and safety" grounds, aimed at preventing wildcat strikes.

One worker told the daily *Evrensel*: "They're forcing us to sign an agreement. They're lying, saying it's because we're in the hazardous work category. But we all know their real concern is to block our right to refuse work and to stop us from halting production. Even this shows once again how afraid of us they are. We will not give up our struggle. Whatever they do, we will not back down from our decision." However, they signed the pledge with the annotation, "All our legal rights are reserved," and went back to work.

In September, workers refused to start working until their demands were met. This time they have been divided into the fired workers ("those outside") and those who returned to work ("those inside"). This division essentially plays into management's hands and serves to confine the struggle within the limits of the courts. Yet it is the management itself that has trampled on the constitution and the law to its own advantage, by mass-firing workers who demanded their legal rights, withholding their wages and refusing to recognize their right to choose a union. The state, true to its class position, has stood by and watched, effectively supporting the company.

The workers' answer must be to reject on principle the claim that corporations have the "right" to fire workers and the "right" not to pay their wages. This shows that workers are facing a *political* class struggle and that their primary weapon lies in arming themselves with class consciousness, maintaining and expanding their unity, and exercising their collective power.

On October 12, while the company had shut down production, hundreds of Smart Solar workers and their supporters marched to Aliağa's Democracy Square. They

demanded reinstatement, payment of the unpaid wages, respect for the right to choose a union and an end to repression at the factory.

Seray ?binli, one of the fired workers, told the *soL Haber*: “All we asked for was our inflation raise. We were thrown out on the street!” Official figures put annual inflation in Turkey at 29.73 percent. The Inflation Research Group (ENAG), made up of independent economists, puts it at 46.61 percent. In these conditions, withholding a right won under the contract means outright impoverishment for workers.

The determined action of the Smart Solar workers is part of a growing wave of workers’ struggles in Türkiye against the soaring cost of living and attacks on economic and social rights. What is at stake is not an isolated onslaught by one company, Smart Solar. It is an intensifying social assault by the ruling classes and governments, in Türkiye and internationally, on the entire working class.

This assault has accelerated as the NATO powers, of which Türkiye is a member, finance imperialist war, which they are escalating from Russia to the Middle East, and their military spending through social cuts. The war is pushing up energy prices and deepening the cost-of-living crisis everywhere. Alongside this, the working class is being made to pay for the transfer of public resources to corporations and the financial markets.

This ruling class offensive is driven by the deepening crisis of the global capitalist system. Resistance to it can be carried forward only if workers unite and act as an independent social force across workplaces, industries and national borders. When the Smart Solar workers halted production in September, it was an important example of workers mobilizing their collective strength.

After last month’s agreement, the *World Socialist Web Site* (WSWS) warned that management’s “retreat was only temporary,” and pointed out the way forward for Smart workers:

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.

The company is citing economic reasons for withholding the workers’ wages and for the layoffs, claiming a “cash shortage.” This claim does not hold up. According to the *Evrensel*, Smart Solar spent 79.1 million lira in September to buy back its own shares. The 19.76 percent raise the workers are demanding would cost 41.1 million lira through the end of the year.

During last month’s action, the management threatened to shift production to subcontracted plants in central Anatolia and to OEM factories in the United States. This underscores that, to carry their struggle forward, Smart Solar workers must unite it with the demands of other sections of the working class across the country and internationally.

This year Türkiye has seen a large number of workers’ struggles developing from below, above all those of Migros warehouse workers, miners and teachers. Throughout 2026, Doruk Mining workers have fought against layoffs and the theft of their wages and benefits. They marched to Ankara and defied police repression, putting the class struggle on the national agenda.

Mass protests and strikes are now spreading from France to Spain and Italy, and from Albania to Ireland, Portugal and Belgium. Alongside them are mass struggles against austerity and political repression in many places, from India to Tunisia and the countries of Latin America. In the United States, nearly 1 million members (over 90 percent) of the United Auto Workers (UAW) did not take part in the union’s national election. These developments show that masses of workers and young people everywhere are becoming increasingly alienated from the old political and trade union establishment and the socioeconomic system they defend. They are searching for an alternative.

The growing workers’ and social struggles demonstrate both the objective basis and the necessity for uniting them in an international movement. The International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC) answers the need for the working class to unite across workplaces, industries and borders.



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