

Geneva, 20 May 2014

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## **IndustriALL Global Union's Call to the ILO for Urgent Action over Safety in Mines in Turkey**

Dear Mr. Director-General,

I am writing this letter to you on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industriall-union.org), which represents more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors throughout the world, to call on the ILO for urgent action over safety in mines in Turkey.

It is not long time ago that IndustriALL Global Union undertook a global solidarity mission to Indonesia to support and offer condolences to our bereaved colleagues and families at the unnecessary deaths of 28 miners killed at the Freeport McMoran's Grasberg copper mine. Now, it is in Turkey, as well as in Afghanistan, where 17 people recently died in a mine fatal accident that somehow has escaped the world's attention. Not long ago, it was Chile, China, Russia, Peru, Pakistan, Chile, in a never ending roll call of death.

We are deeply troubled and concerned about the stubborn and persistent resistance by countries to ratify Convention 176 on Safety and Health in Mines and its associated Recommendation 183. Multinational and national mining companies directly profit from the status quo, as the required investment in health and safety that they would be forced to make--as a result of ratification and compliance--contributes to their balance sheet. Their affinity for contract labour in the sector is a compounding factor in taming the scourge of mining deaths. Trade unions have become the last bastion of mineworkers' protection and safety, even if their existence is deliberately threatened by the very governments sworn in to protect them.

Turkey's hostile attitude towards trade unions rights, as in some other countries, is well documented and is a cause for concern since it has been proven that strong trade unions create safe mines. The lesson to be learned in the Turkey Mine Disaster is that perhaps our efforts at the moment regarding the urgent need for ratification of Convention 176 might be pedestrian and not consistent with the urgency and scale of the challenge.

The recent carnage in Soma, on the back of Turkey's bleak safety record, should mobilise action across the world to deal holistically with the unacceptable rate of fatalities in the mining industries. Mine workers are counting on the ILO to honour its historic mission. Trade unions are challenged to deliver on their promise to hold governments and companies to account and to save life and limb. A global conversation is needed.

While we understand the parameters and constraints that the ILO is forced to work within, IndustriALL Global Union has a clear expectation and demand for a more interventionist role from the ILO. We are also not naïve to the extent that ratification will be the holy grail or panacea for Turkey's mining sector safety woes. It will definitely be a challenge that will need all of us to commit to making the change in Turkey possible.

The challenges are multifaceted ranging from, for example, the absence of a political will to address the regulatory and implementation of legislation, policy incoherence and coordination, the high unemployment rate in Turkey creating a vulnerable force of contract and sub-contracting labour force, the parasitic relationship between business and the government that breeds non-compliance with regulatory requirement and the unbridled pursuit of profit at all costs.

It is important to mention here that we are not raising our concerns about mining safety situation in Turkey just right now. As a matter of fact, in February 2010, we organized a tripartite meeting on promotion of Convention 176 in Turkey with the participation of ILO representatives, government officials, employers and trade unions. However, as political will has never been there, all our attempts in this direction have not managed to create an environment where such tragic accident could have been avoided.

We are in the process of arranging, together with our Turkish affiliates, a global mission to Turkey in solidarity with the fallen mineworkers, their colleagues, and their families and also to mourn with the citizens of that country.

It is time to turn the tide against the relentless loss of lives at the killing fields of coal mines and gold mines as well as the entire mining industry. The killings must stop. It is evident that our calls for ratification by irresponsible governments in most parts of the world constantly fall on deaf ears. As we continue to make the call for ratification, so must we simultaneously reimagine and recast a robust new campaign to make the call a reality.

We are ready, able and willing to invest time, resources and energy to turn the tide against what is often a mass killing of mineworkers, who venture to make an honest living but end up paying with their lives for the greed of profit and the craze of power.

We do believe that an immediate Turkey national tripartite meeting, to be organized by the ILO on promotion of Convention 176, will be very timely and meaningful.

I anticipate your quick reaction.

Sincerely,



Jyrki Raina  
General Secretary

CC:

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