

Geneva, 20 August 2013

Mr. Rafik Daou  
Vice Chairperson  
Suez Steel Company  
Adabeyah Road  
Al-Ataqa Industrial Area 35  
Suez, Egypt

By email to: [rafic.daou@suezsteel.com](mailto:rafic.daou@suezsteel.com); [raficd@yahoo.com](mailto:raficd@yahoo.com);

## Calling for Full Respect of Union Rights at Suez Steel

Dear Rafik Daou,

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 energy, mining and manufacturing sectors from 700 trade unions in 140 countries. Our global union family is working closely with independent and democratic trade unions in Egypt and I am writing to you regarding the behavior of your company, Suez Steel, which is a private-sector company employing 2,200 workers on contracts and another 2,000 day workers.

We are informed that workers at your company have been on strike at the factory in Al-Ataqa industrial zone in Suez for three weeks. Security Forces forcibly dispersed a sit-in on factory premises by strikers on August 12 with a level of violence used that caused strong criticism of their actions.

We are aware that disputes at Suez Steel date from the signing of a collective agreement between the company and the workforce in February 2012, in the wake of workers' protests. The agreement included provisions to pay workers a profit-sharing bonus, and agreed a pay structure, health care and bonuses. The present dispute is about the implementation of a number of provisions in the agreement, most importantly the profit-sharing bonus, as you claim that the company is making a loss and that you owe money to a number of banks. However, the workers are aware that the company has increased its factories to four units, and that it also donated 3 million Egyptian pounds towards paying off the Egyptian national debt.

It is untenable that 12 workers were then dismissed. After workers presented their demands in full, management refused to answer any of them, saying they must return to work before negotiations could begin. Workers refused, and continued their strike when the police arrested two of the strike leaders and the army surrounded the factory.

This week saw lengthy discussions in Cairo between the workers' leaders and the recently appointed Minister of Manpower and Labour, former president of the Egyptian Federation of Independent Trade Unions (EFITU), Mr. Kamal Abu Aita. IndustriALL Global Union also joined the discussions through its MENA Regional Consultant Mr. Ahmed Kamel. These discussions clearly led to the release of the two arrested strike leaders and the Minister further agreed to pay a month's salary for the workforce of the factory from the Emergency Fund of the Ministry.

However, we are informed that the dispute remains at deadlock as you and your company continue to insist that workers must restart work before any negotiations take place. Workers' leaders argue that they cannot ask their colleagues to start work without having a written agreement and payment of the delayed wages.

It is incumbent on you to ensure that your operations fully respect international obligations and core labour standards, including Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, and Convention 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining of the International Labour Organization.

We urge you to arrange a speedy meeting with the trade union representatives with a view to reaching an equitable result.

We anticipate your quick reply.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of stylized letters 'J', 'R', and 'A'.

Jyrki Raina  
General Secretary