



WORKERS UNITING STATEMENT ON TURKISH MINE COLLAPSE

May 20, 2014

Workers Uniting sends our commiserations and solidarity to the family, friends and colleagues of the hundreds of workers that have tragically died, been injured or are still missing following the horrific mining disaster in Soma, Turkey that took place on 13th May 2014.

Turkey's safety record in mining is one of the worst in world and this accident highlights the terrible plight of Turkish miners who work in an environment where companies place profit ahead of safety and the wellbeing of workers.

In the last 73 years around 3000 workers have been killed in Turkish mines and this tragedy has the potential to become one of the worst.

Workers Uniting notes that the Government of Recep Erdogan has been pursuing a policy of deregulation and liberalisation that has led to sub-contracting being rife in the mining industry. This has undoubtedly been a contributory factor in this disaster and we condemn this policy of the Turkish government and demand that they take responsibility for the miners of Turkey and re institute appropriate regulation in the industry.

We remember well the comments made by your Prime Minister after another coal mine tragedy struck, that somehow these accidents are inevitable. Given this view by the leader of your government, it is no surprise that another and far more serious disaster has occurred. We reject this view and know that this and other tragedies can be prevented. To call this an accident is a lie since it was completely expected following the privatization and lax safety enforcement of the mining industry in your country.

- Workers Uniting demands that the Turkish government and the mining company ensure that all efforts are made to save the remaining miners unaccounted for.
- We call on the Turkish government to undertake a full inquiry into mine accidents and poor safety conditions in Turkey.
- We demand that the company take responsibility for what has happened and ensure that the families of those killed, injured and missing are fully supported.
- We stand in solidarity with IndustriALL Global Union in calling on private companies and the Turkish government to ensure the safety of their workers and in calling on the Turkish government as a matter of urgency to ratify and implement the ILO convention 176 on Safety and Health in Mines.

We demand that those responsible for the killing in Turkey will be made to account for their actions, so that the lives of our brothers will not be in vain.

Our solidarity is based on a common experience of tragedy. In Canada, we have been struggling for over 20 years to force the government to hold corporate officials criminally responsible for killing workers. The law, known as the Westray Bill, was initiated by the USW and enacted in 1992 after 26 miners were killed in a coal mine explosion clearly caused by criminal negligence. While over a thousand workers are killed each year in Canada, to date not a single employer has been prosecuted or gone to jail.

Despite the shrinking mining industry in the UK it remains one of the most dangerous places to work. With the decline of the industry there has been a loss of knowledge on safety in the leadership of mines and many fatal and major accidents in the past few years can be traced back to a lack of implementation of effective safety leadership. The UK's coalition government is hell bent on removing 'red-tape' and watering down critical health and safety legislation, including that covering mining. This disaster in Turkey should remind the UK government of how crucial Health and Safety legislation regulations are to the safety of our mines.

Like Turkey, neither the U.K. nor Canada has ratified ILO Convention 176.

Workers Uniting commits itself, in the memory of these workers and the thousands more who have lost their lives in similar disasters around the world, to redoubling our efforts to hold companies to account and force the change that needs to take place in the industry.



Len McCluskey
General Secretary
UNITE the Union



Leo W. Gerard
International President
United Steelworkers

Workers Uniting www.workersuniting.org is the new international union created by Unite the Union - the biggest union in the UK and Republic of Ireland - and the United Steelworkers - the biggest private sector union in the US and Canada.

We represent 3 million members protecting jobs, pay and benefits in the face of the ever increasing power of multinational companies.