

Will Lehman: Oppose the arrest of Mehmet Türkmen, independent union leader in Turkey!

Will Lehman
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The following statement was issued by Will Lehman, a rank-and-file worker at Mack Trucks in Macungie, Pennsylvania. Lehman ran for UAW president in 2022. Mehmet Türkmen was arrested on Monday, February 17, amidst a spreading wave of wildcat strikes in Turkey

I condemn the arrest of Mehmet Türkmen, leader of the independent United Textile, Weaving, and Leather Workers' Union in Turkey, and call for his immediate release.

My name is Will Lehman. I'm a socialist autoworker at Mack Trucks in Pennsylvania in the US. In 2022 I ran for president of the United Auto Workers union on a program of rank-and-file workers' power and abolishing the union bureaucracy.

Türkmen's arrest is an attack on the entire working class. Türkmen was detained for supporting textile workers in Gaziantep who walked out against low wages and rising inflation. The Erdoğan government has responded with repression: banning protests, sending police to break up strikes, and trying to intimidate workers into submission.

Repression isn't just happening in Turkey. It's a global war on the working class. Everywhere, governments side with corporations to keep wages low and crush independent organizing.

In Turkey, inflation is wiping out workers' wages while the rich get tax breaks.

In the US, Trump, Musk and the government of the oligarchs are doing the same. Trump and the Republicans are trying to establish a dictatorship in order to hand billions to the corporations and the military, destroy social programs and millions of jobs, escalate the genocide in Gaza and prepare new

devastating imperialist wars. The Democrats are offering no resistance to these attacks, since they are far more fearful of provoking a mass movement of workers.

The UAW bureaucracy and other major unions claim to fight for workers, but they act just like the pro-corporate unions in Turkey. They block strikes, isolate workers, and tell us to back either the Democrats or Republicans—two capitalist parties that are vicious enemies of the working class.

The answer is rank-and-file organization and international unity. Workers in Turkey, the US, and worldwide must unite outside the control of the union bureaucracies and pro-corporate politicians.

Mehmet Türkmen must be released immediately, and all bans on protests must be lifted.

The ruling class is escalating its attacks on the working class internationally. They are imprisoning socialists, like Bogdan Syrotyuk, who was arrested in Ukraine last year because he is fighting to unite Ukrainian and Russian workers to stop the war.

Trump is already attacking workers in the US with stepped up ICE raids targeting working class immigrants and mass firings of federal workers. The attacks on the working class will only escalate from here if workers don't fight back.

I call on autoworkers, postal workers, Amazon workers, and workers across the US and the world to stand with the striking workers in Turkey. This fight is about more than one struggle. It's about the right of all workers to organize against corporations and governments attacking us.

Join the International Workers Alliance of Rank-and-File Committees (IWA-RFC), which is building a real,

independent movement of workers to fight back. The future belongs to the working class. We must stand together. Sign up at wsws.org/workers.



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