

INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION
ITUC OnLine

Global reach of Samsung's medieval practices revealed in new report

Brussels ITUC Online 5 October 2016 (ITUC OnLine): From South Korea to Mexico, from Vietnam to Hungary, new research reveals how the global reach of Samsung's ruthless pursuit of profits impacts the everyday lives of its workers.

Samsung workers have shed light on the working conditions throughout the multinational's supply chains. The International Trade Union Confederation and IndustriALL global union have released a new report, "Samsung - Modern Tech Medieval Conditions".

"From denying justice to the families of former employees who died from cancers caused by unsafe workplaces, to dodging tax and engaging in price-fixing cartels, one thing is constant: Samsung's corporate culture is ruthlessly geared towards maximising profit to the detriment of the everyday lives of its workers," said Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary.

The ITUC is petitioning Samsung to end worker abuse and abolish its no-union policy. <http://act.samsungexposed.org> A new video Samsung's Secret tells the story of one union family caught up in Samsung's no union policy which affects the entire Asian electronics industry. <https://youtu.be/fxyiXIBwhHM>

"For contractors in Samsung's supply chain whose workers join a union, there is a contract guillotine. The company uses its power and leverage to intervene with its suppliers. From the top of its supply chain down, Samsung prohibits the formation of unions by threatening to cancel contracts wherever workers organise," said Sharan Burrow.

Samsung SDI, the company that made the fire-prone batteries in the Samsung Galaxy Note 7, cut their workforce by 35 per cent and have suppressed union organising for more than ten years. Like other Samsung companies, workers are afraid to point out problems on the production line.

"When airlines ban the use of Samsung's Note 7 in the air, passengers get a sense of the fear that many Samsung workers face every day for their own health and safety," said Burrow.

The worker safety group known as SHARPS in English (Supporters for the Health and Rights of People in the Semi-Conductor Industry) is planning a rally at Samsung's Seoul headquarters on 7th October, World Day for Decent Work. <http://www.wddw.org>

As one of the largest and most powerful companies in the world –

- Samsung's affiliate companies produce around a fifth of South Korea's total exports.
- Samsung Electronics alone posted annual revenue in 2012 of over USD 183 billion, a figure exceeding the GDP of countries such as Cambodia, and Honduras.
- Samsung chairman Lee Kun-hee has an estimated net worth of USD 12.6 billion.

- Lee Kun-hee has been in a coma since May 2014 after he suffered a cardiac arrest. His son, Jae-yong, is the heir apparent of the Samsung Group. Samsung Electronics shareholders are due to meet on 27th October where the Samsung heir is expected to join the board.

The report also sheds light on the shady dealings of Korea's "Chaebol" conglomerates, which dominate political decision-making in a country that regularly puts union leaders in prison for simply defending workers' rights.

"Corporate greed, corporate bullying cannot be tolerated – it's time for a global rule of law to guarantee globalisation with fair working conditions, with rights, minimum wages on which people can live with dignity and safe and security work," said Jyrki Raina, General Secretary, IndustriALL.

Sharan Burrow said: "Beginning with Samsung, we have begun to expose corporate greed and the failure of the world's biggest corporations to account for abuse in their supply chains – from union busting, poverty wages, insecure and unsafe work, to forced overtime, informal work and modern slavery.

"It doesn't end here: we will keep up the pressure for reform and the rule of law, we will engage with pension funds managing workers' capital regarding investment strategies and we will stand with workers everywhere as they demand the rule of law. We will end corporate greed."

Read the ITUC and IndustriAll Briefing "Samsung – Modern Tech Medieval conditions"
<http://www.ituc-csi.org/samsung-modern-tech-medieval>
(English) (French, Spanish, German will be available shortly)

Watch the video Samsung's Secret <https://youtu.be/fxyiXIBwhHM>
(English, French, German, Spanish)

Sign the petition: <http://act.samsungexposed.org>
(English, French, German, Spanish)

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