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Trade Union Harassment Continues at Prada Supplier



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It is with great regret that the Clean Clothes Campaign is reopening the campaign to demand justice for workers at the DESA leather factory in Duzce, Turkey.

This decision follows failure by both DESA management and the European buyers to implement and support a protocol signed by DESA and the union Deri Is over six months ago.

We are calling on supporters to contact DESA and the buyers at the factory to express your disappointment in their failure to uphold the rights of DESA workers and to urge them to ensure that the protocol is properly implemented and to take steps to proactively support freedom of association at the factory.



Latest update

In recent months workers report that harassment by supervisors of union members is increasing. At least one worker has filed a legal suit against a supervisor charging him with this offence.

Of particular concern is the decision of DESA to fire two union members, both on the ground of allegations disputed by the workers.

Ümit Ugurlu was dismissed on 13 May 2010. Allegedly, his employment contract was terminated without notice because he injured his friend's finger. However, workers who witnessed the incident refute the allegation and claim that Necati Ata (the injured worker) pulled on the glove of Mr Ugurlu and at the same time crashed his machine. The union has started legal action for reinstatement.

On June 9th a second worker, Cemal Uyar was refused entry back into the factory following two days sick leave. The personnel department informed him that his employment contract was terminated without notice because he

did not come to work without asking for permission and that during this time it was confirmed he was working at another workplace.

Given the past history of illegal dismissals by DESA, we would expect them to ensure that any worker dismissals took place only after a full and proper grievance procedure and investigation. The fact that DESA management now feel free to start dismissing union members without due process is yet another indication of the deteriorating situation inside the factory.

Background

A Memorandum of Understanding between the union Deri Is and DESA was signed in August 2009 following a year-long international campaign against the unfair practices of DESA, a Turkish leather supplier of major European luxury brands such as Prada, Mulberry, Debenhams, Marks and Spencer and El Corte Ingles.

The MOU stated that the international campaign would be halted on the understanding that DESA would reinstate several of the dismissed workers, issue a right to organise guarantee, recognise Deri Is as the sole union at the factory and commit to expressing neither a positive or negative attitude towards the unionisation of its workers.

The CCC has continued to monitor the situation in Turkey, to check the implementation of the agreement through a permanent dialogue with the trade union. Since the beginning it was clear that the protocol was the beginning of a new stage during which workers must be made aware of their rights and be reassured that the exercise of their rights would not lead to dismissals or reprisals. To make this process credible and genuine would have required a change of direction by Desa and a proactive support by the brands.

A Clean Clothes Campaign delegation visited Turkey in December 2009, during which they met around 35 Desa workers together with Deri Is representatives. The interviews conducted revealed that the protocol had been breached in the following ways:

- Workers identified by Deri Is have not been reinstated
- The 'Right to Organise' guarantee as properly drafted from ITGLWF has not been distributed to the workers
- Workers are facing again episodes of repression and harassment clearly intended to avoid their unionisation
- Desa management actively interferes to try to prevent workers from joining the union.

Only a small number of buyers responded, all stating that they visited the factory and did not see any harassment taking place and were confident there was no malpractice at the factory. None of the buyers spoke to or contacted the union or union members. None of them responded at all to our detailed requests for concrete action.

Write today to Desa buyers and Desa factory management. Call on them to properly implement the protocol agreement and to take all necessary measures to ensure an atmosphere free from intimidation at the factory.

Letter to buyers

Dear Madam / Sir,

I am extremely disappointed to learn that the Memorandum of Understanding, which was signed between DESA and Deri Is in 2009, has not been properly implemented by DESA management. I am particularly concerned at the harassment of union members and the recent dismissals of two of your workers without following proper procedure.

I urgently call upon you to take immediate and transparent action to ensure that the protocol is fully implemented. Specifically I call on you to:

- Contact DESA management and ask them to immediately halt the harassment of union members, and to abide by the letter and spirit of the August protocol;
- Demand the reinstatement of both Ferda Yilmaz and Emel Yavuz as agreed in the August negotiations;
- Ensure that an official Right to Organise guarantee is distributed, based on the model drafted by the ITGLWF;
- Support and monitor an official complaints mechanism. Such a mechanism must include a worker representative nominated by the union;
- Ask DESA to ensure regular meetings take place with Deri Is representatives and to send notes from each meeting to all interested parties including Deri Is and the major buyers;
- Include trade union representatives in any ongoing monitoring and maintain regular contact with them;
- Specify that you expect orders for your company to be completed at the Duzce factory and not subcontracted to other suppliers in Turkey
- Carry out training for management, supervisors and workers on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Such training should be carried out by parties agreed upon by Deri Is and ITGLWF.

Yours sincerely,

Letter to DESA

Dear Mr. Celet,

I am extremely concerned about the breaching of the Memorandum of Understanding which was signed between your company and Deri Is. I am particularly concerned at the harassment of union members and the recent dismissals of two of your workers without following proper procedure.

While initially shocked by the working conditions and workers rights abuses found in your factory I was hopeful that DESA was now moving towards being a factory where workers fundamental rights were respected.

I urgently call upon you to fully respect the protocol signed with Deri Is.

Specifically I call on you to:

- immediately halt the harassment of union members and to abide by the letter and spirit of the August protocol;
- reinstate both Ferda Yilmaz and Emel Yavuz as agreed in the August negotiations;
- ensure that an official Right to Organise guarantee is distributed, based on the model drafted by the ITGLWF;
- establish an official complaints mechanism, including a buyers representative, which can receive and investigate complaints of harassment or intimidation and support re-mediation in each case. Such a mechanism must include a worker representative nominated by the union;
- ensure that regular meetings take place with Deri Is representatives and send notes from each meeting to all interested parties including Deri Is and the major buyers;
- include trade union representatives in any ongoing monitoring and maintain regular contact with them;
- carry out training for management, supervisors and workers on the right to freedom of association and collective bargaining. Such training should be carried out by parties agreed upon by Deri Is and ITGLWF.

Yours sincerely,

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