

Workers at TikTok's Berlin headquarters are on strike today, 23 July, to protest the company's refusal to negotiate conditions of an announced mass firing of 150 content moderators. The layoffs come as part of the social media platform's plan to shutter its Trust and Safety Department and shift critical moderation work to AI and external providers.

Workers, who have spent recent months training the AI systems now slated to replace them, are rallying under the banner: "We trained your machines – pay us what we deserve!"

German union ver.di, a UNI affiliate, called the strike with clear demands:

- Severance payments equal to three years' salary per employee
- 12-month extension of the notice period

The employees say such support is crucial not only to recognize their skilled labour but also to help them retrain and transition into new careers – particularly necessary for workers whose residency status in Germany depends upon employment.

These steps are needed in recognition of the severe stress and trauma the job can create, and considering TikTok generates over US\$23 billion annually – partly thanks to their labour – moderators argue their modest demands for fair severance and transition support are fully justified.

"It is disrespectful of TikTok to shirk all social responsibility and even refuse to negotiate with us. Today, the employees are sending a clear signal that they will not accept this. They are going on strike and, in doing so, becoming pioneers of union organizing in the platform economy," says Lucas Krentel, Deputy Regional Head of the Media Division at ver.di Berlin-Brandenburg.

ver.di warns that by outsourcing content moderation, TikTok evades responsibility for fair pay, adequate psychological support and stable working conditions – further degrading already demanding work. Moderators emphasize that AI cannot adequately handle culturally sensitive decisions, and human oversight is essential to a safe platform.

"Content moderators are essential to making the internet safe and usable, but companies like TikTok too often degrade their conditions and devalue the work of these professionals. Today's strike is an important moment where content moderators are demanding recognition for all they've done – and sacrificed – to protect TikTok users.

We stand with ver.di and with moderators everywhere who are organizing, speaking out and fighting back,” said Benjamin Parton, Head of UNI’s ICTS sector.

On a global level, UNI has supported the first-ever **trade union alliance of content moderators** to fight for living wages, safe working conditions and union representation in their industry. Last month, the alliance launched a comprehensive health and safety protocol for safer, sustainable content moderation.

UNI stands with ver.di and TikTok moderators in Berlin, whose fight is crucial to securing dignity, fair compensation and humane working conditions for content moderators everywhere in the digital age.

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