Amazon’s German Workers in Seattle to Protest at World Headquarters

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In America, Amazon’s blatant anti-union bias has thwarted attempts by its warehouse workers to have a voice in their workplace. But that same anti-worker attitude is not playing so good with the online retail giant’s German employees who, since May of this year, have staged a number of rolling strikes over wages, working conditions and the mega-corporation’s refusal to negotiate with the German union, ver.di which represents hundreds of thousands of Germany’s retail workers.

And so, the German workers are bringing their fight to America.

On Monday, December 16 at 10:00 am, ver.di members will stand together with American unions in solidarity outside Amazon’s worldwide headquarters to put the company on notice that this fight is just beginning.

When: Monday, December 16, 10:00 am
Where: Amazon Headquarters, 450 Terry Ave. North
Who: Members of Germany’s Ver.di Union and union members from Washington state standing in solidarity with their International brothers and sisters. (MLKCLC, CWA, Teamsters, UFCW, SEIU and more)
Why: To demand better wages & benefits; more humane working conditions; and formal negotiations with the online retail giant.

Germany’s Amazon employees are outraged that the company refuses to hold formal negotiations with ver.di. The union wants to address the company’s practice of constant monitoring of workers and the unreasonable metrics that workers find impossible to meet. Wages are another problem. In Germany, wage classifications are set according to industry standards. Amazon is refusing to pay the same rate set for other German warehouse workers and instead classify these positions as "logistic workers" because the pay is much lower.

At a previous strike at an Amazon plant in Leipzig, Germany, Frank Bsirske, the head of the powerful service union, ver.di said: “We are not going to let a big American company come here and play Wild West. This is a clash of cultures.”

The German workers from ver.di will arrive in Seattle Sunday afternoon and will be available for interviews until Tuesday morning. They will be joined at their protest by a number of American unions including members of the Martin Luther King County Labor Council, Communications Workers of America, Teamsters, UFCW, SEIU, Working Washington and more.

This fight is about wage inequality. Amazon is a hugely profitable corporation in both America and Germany and employees worldwide feel they should be able to share in the profits they help create. The majority of Amazon’s workers support the German unions and Amazon should respect the democratic rights of their employees.
UNION STATEMENTS:

Richard Trumka, President at the The American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO)
“We welcome the German Amazon workers and their union, ver.di, to the United States. Just as German workers have stood in support of U.S. workers employed by global corporations we join your fight for fairness at one of the largest corporate retailers in the world. It’s time that Amazon make good on its obligations to its workers, not just its shareholders and executives, and we will be there in Seattle to make our voices heard.”

Pat O’Neill, Executive Vice President and Director of Organizing at the United Food and Commercial Workers Union (UFCW)
"Companies are working in a global setting and workers realize that they too must act globally to affect change locally”. O’Neill, who is also President of UNI Commerce Global Union Federation, of which Ver.di is an active member, went on “the UFCW and our members applaud the brave efforts of our dear colleagues in Amazon Germany, who are standing up for their rights and we will stand right beside them in their struggle. We have no doubt they will emerge victorious.”

Notes to Editors: The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union (UFCW) represents more than 1.3 million workers, primarily in the retail and meatpacking, food processing and poultry industries.

Statement from the International Brotherhood of Teamsters
„In the United States, Amazon has built its high customers satisfaction through the efforts of the tens of thousands of unionized American distribution workers who deliver Amazon products. These workers enjoy the wages and protections of collective agreements negotiated by their union and Amazon’s supply chain partners. As Amazon expands its presence into Germany and other countries, the Teamsters Union hopes Amazon leaders see the wisdom in continuing to engage a workforce that has the benefits of collective bargaining agreements and are treated not as robots, but as full partners."

Notes to Editors: The Teamsters are known as the champion of freight drivers and warehouse workers, but have organized workers in virtually every occupation imaginable, both professional and non-professional, private sector and public sector.

George Kohl, senior director, Communications Workers of America (CWA)
“Today’s strike Amazon Germany workers and the strong support by ver.di is inspirational. ver.di recognizes the danger of allowing the US model of suppressing workers’ rights and living standards to take hold in other countries, and is standing strong against this assault on workers. Members of CWA who have built a strong partnership with ver.di are supporting the strike by Amazon Germany workers and are letting them know, as ver.di members have promised us, we have your back."

Notes to Editors: CWA represents 700,000 private and public sector workers in telecommunications, media, customer service, manufacturing, government, health care and higher education and airlines.

David Freiboth, Executive Secretary Treasurer of the M.L. King County Labor Council
“The Seattle labor community stands in solidarity with our brothers and sisters in Germany against American style corporate greed. Workers around the world stand united to prevent American “race to the bottom” corporate economics from infecting Europe.”

Notes to Editors: The M. L. King County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, is the central body of labor organizations in King County, Washington State.
Frank Bsirske, chairman of the United Services Union (ver.di)
Based on the philosophy of Amazon, “work hard, have fun, make history” – one has to emphasize: it’s the employees of Amazon in Germany, who are now making history by taking to the streets for their demands. What is characterizing the corporate culture of Amazon will not be left into the hands of managers – the employees are now taking the initiative. These people are performing successful and reliable services day by day. With great justice, they call their employer for appreciativeness, respect and a clear commitment to the collective agreement of the retail- and mail order business. The act of solidarity of American unions for the strikes in Germany is a powerful sign that cooperation among workers is not bounded by national borders and continents. These protests are an encouraging response to the questionable methods of a global company like Amazon.

For more information or to set up interviews with the German union members while they are in Seattle contact:

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