

Irakliy Petriashvili
President
GTUC
By e-mail

PERC

2 February 2011

Solidarity letter to workers of Tkibuli mine

Dear Irakliy,

We were shocked by the information received about the situation in the mining industry in Georgia leading to a series of tragic events resulting in the deaths of nine workers and many more injured in less than a year due to poor working conditions and lack of concern for safety measures in the mines. The stunning level of irresponsibility and callousness demonstrated by the inaction of management and state authorities witnessing a chain of fatal accidents over this short period is made even more outrageous by the attempts of the company to fabricate evidence shifting the blame on the victims themselves. In fact, the cases give grim evidence of the nature of the policy of the Georgian authorities towards workers and the total lack of any institution that can effectively monitor safety and health at the workplace, take appropriate measures and promote prevention of accidents at work, especially fatal ones.

We fully share the anger of the miners of Tkibuli mine, who are striking today to make the management face the reality and take responsibility for the events and for the urgent changes in the working conditions of the miners. These naturally involve improvement of health and safety conditions and equipment at the mine as well as proper compensation to the victims of accidents. Such changes should also involve higher wage levels that adequately match the heavy work performed and should also include stability of employment through open-end contracts for all. In a country where no Labour Inspection is functioning, where the labour laws do not provide any safeguards against discrimination and leave workers at the mercy of management, only by mobilising and collective action can the rights of workers – including of the freedom of association and collective bargaining – be implemented.

We hail the workers and the unions of Georgia, who stand up for their lives, health and decent work!

We are ready to support further actions undertaken by the GTUC aimed to improve the situation in the mining sector. Please convey our full support and solidarity to the workers of Tkibuli mine, to the Metallurgical, Mining and Chemical Workers Union and to all the unionists of the GTUC.

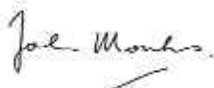
Yours sincerely,

Sharan Burrow



ITUC General Secretary

John Monks



ETUC/PERC General Secretary

Mikhail Shmakov



PERC President