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China

Appeal to defend poisoned workers

- News from around the world -

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In July 2004, it was reported that two battery factories in Mainland China had poisoned at least 300 workers with cadmium.

[<https://internationalviewpoint.org/IMG/jpg/gpbatteries.jpg>]

The two factories belong to the Gold Peak Industrial Holding Ltd, an Hong Kong and Singapore based Asian TNC, and its electronic products are sold all over the world under different brand names. Affected workers were paid little compensation, and at one point were even threatened by the company and the local government that if they petitioned the central government in Beijing again they could end up with criminal charges.

Globalization Monitor, a Hong Kong based NGO, has since then taken up the case and has been campaigning against Gold Peak. It has gained support from many trade unions and NGOs in demanding Gold Peak set up a Hong Kong based medical fund to take care of the workers. However, Gold Peak has ignored this demand. We appeal to our brothers and sisters all over the world to endorse an open letter to GP to help press it to be accountable to its workers, the community and civil society.

Globalization Monitor

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P.O.Box 72797, Kowloon Post Office

Open letter to Mr. Victor Lo Chung Wing, Chairman & CEO of the Gold Peak Industrial Holding Ltd

Gold Peak Industries (Holdings) Limited

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Appeal to defend poisoned workers

Dear Mr. Lo,

RE: CADMIUM POISONING AND POLLUTION IN CHINA

It has come to our notice that your two factories in HuiZhou, China, has poisoned at least 300 of your workers who were found with much higher than normal level of cadmium last year, and at least six of them has already being officially diagnosis as cadmium poisoning. We are aware of the fact that cadmium is a toxic chemical that must be handled with care. However, you make your workers to process cadmium with little protection and no OSH training for years, which resulted in wide scale poisoning among hundreds of workers. In addition to this, it was also widely reported that there might be serious community pollution by your company. One environmental group found that there were higher than normal level of cadmium in the community.

We notice that you have admitted the seriousness of the case indirectly in your company half-year report that stated that your company paid more than 10 million HK dollars for medical care and compensation. However, it is far from what is necessary.

There is no transparency at all as to the actual scale of the poisoning. Your company releases nothing at all concerning this. And without this, the workers, the community, and the consumers around the world who may buy GP products, are unable to defend their own rights.

Although two dozens of Hong Kong NGOs and trade unions has pressed your company to involve NGOs and trade unions in the monitoring of OSH training to your workers, it seems that you practically ignored their reasonable demand.

We notice that cadmium is difficult to get out of the body, which implies that it may stay in the workers' bodies for years, and that it may cause cancer and chronic bone pains years later. The workers are concerned that once they leave the factories, or once the factories got winding up, they will be left without any medical care and compensation when they seriously fall ill years later. However, there is no mechanism at all which could provide some assurance to workers. You make private promises to NGOs that you will set up a special fund for this purpose and will involve NGOs in this effort. However, we see no public commitment and no real progress from your company.

Your company has gone so far that on the 3rd September 2004, your subsidiary the HuiZhou GP issued a joint letter with the local government to workers banning them from petitioning the Central government, which we consider as a gross violation of human rights.

Therefore, we demand that your company:

- 1 Be publicly accountable to your workers, the community and the consumers; release all vital information concerning the cadmium poisoning case;
- 2 To involve NGOs and trade unions in the monitoring of OSH training to workers;
- 3 Set up the fund for taking care of your workers and involve the NGOs in the process.
- 4 Respect the basic human right of the workers, particularly the right to petition.