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Ukraine:

Appeal of the Kryvih Rih basin miners to the workers of Europe

- News from around the world -

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The attention of the world community is currently focussed on the confrontation between pro-government and anti-government forces in Ukraine. This confrontation is becoming all the more tenacious and bloody. All the more it is being turned into an interethnic confrontation that is stoking up a hysterical mutual hatred between workers of different nationalities.

What remains beyond people's attention at this moment is the sharpening social and economic situation, and not only in the regions where the fighting is taking place. The rapid devaluation of the hryvnia (Ukrainian currency), the steep rise in prices of consumer goods, transport and basic services, as well as the cutbacks in production in many enterprises – all this has led to a sharp fall in workers' real wages. By our estimates there has been a 30-50% fall in real wages.

The announcement by the governor of Dnipropetrovsk oblast (province) of an increase in pay for April of 20% was actually turned into an insulting handout to workers of 300-700 hryvnia (Â£25-58). Miners received only 15% of the actual rate, which often makes up less than half their actual income. As well, the money was paid out as "material support", which means it will not be included in the calculation of their average monthly wage and therefore in the calculation of their annual leave.

As a result we have no option but to demand an immediate doubling of the real wage in the interests of preserving social peace in this country. We are deeply convinced that the main cause of the destabilised situation in the country is the greed of Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs, who pay a beggar's wage to workers, send all their profits off-shore and don't pay taxes in Ukraine. In fact the oligarchs are almost completely exempt from taxes on their profits.

We turn to you with a call to support our struggle against the oligarchs, who have brought Ukraine into the current crisis and who continue to destabilise it further, threatening to provoke a fratricidal war in Ukraine which without any doubt will have catastrophic consequences for all of Europe. It is necessary to put pressure on the corporations of the Ukrainian and Russian oligarchs, many of whom have their shares placed on the London Stock Exchange.

There is a mounting labour dispute in the enterprises of EVRAZ plc, whose headquarters are in London. Today (11 May 2014) the miners marched through the streets of Kryvii Rih to the administration of the EVRAZ Sukha Balka plc and showered its office with loose change as a sign of protest against the fictitious "wage increase" for April. The Independent Union of Miners of Ukraine calls upon the British public to picket the offices of EVRAZ plc and the offices of other Russian and Ukrainian oligarchs' corporations in London and other cities in Europe. If we don't force them to come round the chances of preserving peace in Ukraine will be elusive.

At the same time we are demanding that the authorities officially recognise the miners' self defense and the arming of miners' brigades. Organised workers and workers' self defense are precisely that stabilising factor which can effectively prevent the escalation of violence in Ukraine. In those places where organised workers are controlling the situation mass actions never turn into mass killings. The workers defended the Maidan in Kryvii Rih. The workers did not allow any violence when they took under their control the situation in the city of Krasnodon during the recent general strike there.

We call upon the workers of Britain for solidarity. In particular we will be grateful for any information and humanitarian support, but the biggest need we feel right now is for personal protective clothing for members of the self defense brigades (body armour and the like) and mobile radio communications equipment.

Appeal of the Kryvii Rih basin miners to the workers of Europe

Long live international workers' solidarity!

By preserving the peace in Ukraine we will preserve the peace of Europe!

Oleksandr Bondar, Head of the branch of the Independent Union of Miners of Ukraine at the EVRAZ Sukha Balka plc

Yuri Samoilo, Co-ordinator of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine in Kryvii Rih, Head of the Independent Union of Miners of Ukraine in Kryvii Rih.