

Dismissed workers of Yves Rocher Turkey affiliate fight back against anti-labour policies

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Based in Rennes, France, Yves Rocher is a "worldwide cosmetics and beauty brand". The company is present in 88 countries and employs 13,500 people, not including more than 215,000 people employed through indirect jobs. Turkey's Kosan Kozmetik, the Turkish subsidiary of French cosmetics company Yves Rocher, employs 400 workers and produces the brand Flormar, the number one make-up brand in Turkey with a 21 per cent market share.

However, being a worldwide "respectful" brand doesn't automatically prevent being unlawful. After joining IndustriALL affiliate Petrol-Is Union, 130 workers at Kosan Kozmetik were dismissed.

The Petrol-Is union and its members are picketing in front of the factory, and the dismissal cases have also been taken into the judicial process since the termination

of contracts due to union membership is unjustified.

Following an intensive recruitment campaign by Petrol-Is Chemical and Rubber Workers' Union of Turkey, in March, a sufficient number of workers at Yves Rocher's subsidiary in Turkey, Kosan Kozmetik, exercised their free choice of being part of a union. Once the proof of the majority was obtained, Petrol-Is leadership attempted to build a constructive social dialogue and approached the company with an offer to discuss collective bargaining. The company rejected the offer and challenged the union certificate issued by the Ministry of Labour in court, using unfounded arguments and loopholes in the national legislation to hinder collective bargaining.

In April, local management dismissed 14 members of Petrol-Is due to their union membership. Besides, the administration continued to pressure and intimidate workers, undermining their legitimate rights to join a union at the plant. As the workers refused to give up their affiliation with Petrol-Is, management dismissed six more union members on 11 May. On 15 May, Kosan Kozmetik sacked 65 workers over their involvement in trade union work, bringing the total number of dismissed workers to 85.

In a letter to the company, IndustriALL Global Union called on management to respect trade union rights, reinstate the dismissed union members and enter into dialogue with Petrol-Is. Valter Sanches, IndustriALL general secretary said:

“Kosan Kozmetik's behaviour constitutes a blatant violation of Turkish labour law, as well as fundamental international labour standards, including Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, and Convention 98 on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining of the International Labour Organization (ILO).”

Petrol-Is and its members picketed in front of the plant with large support from other workplaces and society.

“It is completely unacceptable for such well-known global brand not to respect fundamental rights in its subsidiaries,”

says Kemal Ozkan, IndustriALL assistant general secretary.

“We expect Yves Rocher to open the channels to address the situation in Gebze. Otherwise, we will take it to different platforms through an extensive campaign.”

The Flormar workers' resistance, which has made a tremendous impact in public opinion, pertinaciously continues with a great determination of cosmetics workers, who were fired because of unionising.

As Flormar administration tries to protect its "brand reputation" by advertising and press releases since it cannot conceal the company's anti-labour policies, its sales rate has seriously started to decline.

Yves Rocher stands out as a brand that has carried out numerous social responsibility projects to enhance its global image, claiming that it respects the human rights and women's rights, promoting environmental awareness by producing organic products. Yves Rocher, which claims to respect the world, nature and ecology, also acts inconsistently with the international documents that it has signed. It is seen that Yves Rocher disregards one [Principle 3] of the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact, enacting that "Businesses should uphold the freedom of association and the effective recognition of the right to collective bargaining..."

"First, they fired 12 of our workfellows. They thought they could stop our struggle for unionising. But as they have acted like this, we have clamped together, growing in number even more," says one of the workers explaining the unionising process since the beginning of the year.

Also reminding that more workers were fired because they supported their resisting friends with applause and whistling, the workers said: "They stop at nothing to prevent us from communicating with our friends inside, but they will never achieve in this. We did not ask for much."