

News



Task for 2018:

United Against Global Precarisation !

Workers on both ends of the global garment supply chain are living in different environments, but they are making similar experiences. That's what we continue to see in the ExChains network's exchanges and common struggles all over. In 2017, one specific issue was clearly on top of the list of shared problems along the global supply chain: the precarisation of working and living conditions, driven by the companies' greed for profit. Which means: Secure jobs are being cut in favour of temporary, insecure, and low-paid labour; and regular working hours are being substituted by hourly work, subcontracted labour, and working hours on short notice.

FTZ&GSEU trade union in Sri Lanka, for instance, made the abuse of subcontracted labour the major issue of their World Day of Decent Work rally on October 8th.

Example Avery Dennison, India: The struggle at the garment label company in Bangalore, supplier of H&M and Primark among others, keeps escalating. So-called „contract workers“, all of whom have actually been working in the same factory incessantly for 1 up to 12 years, are demanding equal treatment with their fellow workers directly employed at Avery Dennison. For reason of this struggle, 39 „contract“ workers active with GATWU trade union have been laid off so far. Workers' demands continue to be: 1. take back all layoffs; 2. take on all workers in direct, unlimited employment; 3. equal pay for equal work; 4. end discrimination; 5. end union busting.

The Primark Hannover works council and the H&M Germany national works council supported the Indian „contract“ workers' demands, spelling out to their own companies in letters that these workers' discrimination



An International Network for the Right to Organise along the Global Textile, Garment, and Retail Supply Chain

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is in fact a clear breach of the respective company codes of conduct, and requesting their employers to support the demands of GATWU and the workers with their suppliers.

Since December 18th, the protesting „contract“ workers have been rejecting the meals during their shifts, holding protest sit-ins in the canteen during their meal times. Their „employer“, the manpower agency Sri Udyog, requested them to stop this kind of protest: Rejecting the meals would harm workers' own wellbeing, and put at risk the safety of all workers in the factory.



Example H&M, Germany: The treatment of H&M store workers has reached a new all-time low across the country. The company is centrally aiming at active works council members - labour activists who are



trying to secure reliable labour relations against intensified company efforts to push for precarisation. H&M is very creative in finding ways to impede their work and get rid of them: activists are called troublemakers while the

company threatens to close stores, blaming the activists for it; the company offers them termination agreements and compensations - and if H&M is lucky, the terminations would even reduce employees in the respective store below the number that legally enforces a store works council; works council members are being psychically pressurised in order to wear them down and make them give up.

New precarisation highlight in 2017: H&M do not feel responsible for their employees anymore: While formerly in the case of store closures workers were transferred to other stores nearby, the new practice is to tell them there is no work for them in the nearby stores - without offering any evidence. Warehouse jobs are being outsourced from Germany to the Netherlands where taxes are low and trade union organisation is weak. The large German distribution centre at Grossostheim will be closed in 2018, while a new one has been built in the Netherlands.

A German H&M works council member who had once felt deep identification with his employer, turns his personal disappointment into a militant call:

„H&M, it is now clear to us that you're trying to leave us behind! But we will struggle to stay here as long as we can... You can't get rid of us - and if you do, we will take care that the world will get to know what cynical game you played with us... We are on eye level. We deserve respect and a decent treatment!“

Happy 2018 !- as a Year of Common Struggle, not of Precarity !

