

# Hundreds of workers killed after an electrical fault in a mine in in Western Turkey

Saturday 17 May 2014, by [IndustriAll Global Union](#) (Date first published: 14 April 2014).

## Rising death toll turns mine accident in Turkey to carnage

IndustriALL Global Union and its worldwide family mourn the deaths of hundreds of mineworkers in Soma, Manisa province in Western Turkey. As of the time of writing, 205 miners are dead and more than 80 are hospitalized. Rescue efforts continue to safeguard hundreds more miners trapped underground. Oxygen is still being pumped into the mine, however hopes are diminishing.

Belonging to a private company, the mine is organized by IndustriALL's affiliate Maden-İş, Mineworkers' Union of Turkey. Around 800 miners were in and around the mine when an electrical fault triggered a transformer to explode causing a large fire around noon time on Tuesday 13 May. The fire caused a power cut in the mine rendering mine cages unusable and the majority of workers trapped 2km underground and 4km from the exit. Rescue efforts have continued through the night while families of the over 200 unaccounted for miners wait at the mine's entrance and in the local hospital.

Turkey's record on mine safety is poor, and IndustriALL labels the deaths of mineworkers as carnage. Every death in a mine is avoidable and IndustriALL's campaign for ratification of the ILO Convention 176 will continue in Turkey and elsewhere. Pressure is already building on Turkey's government, criticized for ignoring safety warnings while workers pay with their lives.

Nurettin Akçul, General President and Vedat Ünal, General Secretary of Maden-İş report that the blast occurred at the time of a shift change, making it more difficult to know how many miners are still trapped underground. The Maden-İş leaders report that: "the mine is registered with necessary legal certification, all workers are covered by social security. The local union reps confirm that all workers are equipped with oxygen masks underground, but nobody knows how long the masks can keep them alive in this situation."

The survival rate for coal miners following explosions or fires is extremely low, as compared to accidents in mines for hard rock or metal. The rescue must happen as quickly as possible following an explosion in a coal mine if those trapped are to be brought out alive. IndustriALL and everybody watching hopes that this case will be the exception to the rule. Carbon monoxide poisoning is the biggest threat to those still trapped underground.

IndustriALL Global Union wrote today to Maden-İş:

*"This tragedy must rank as the worst mining tragedy in recent memory, and is made all the more tragic by the seemingly uncaring attitude of the government and mining companies. This attitude is unacceptable and must come to an end. It is intolerable that mine workers in Turkey are denied their basic human right to work in an environment that guarantees their safety, and that instead they are expected to go to work to die.*

The number of mineworkers involved in the fatal accident is mind-boggling and staggering. We call upon the private company operating the mine and the government of Turkey to ensure that as many

miners as possible of the 400 still remaining in the mine pit be rescued.

Turkey has possibly the worst safety record in terms of mining accidents and explosions in Europe and the third worst one in the world. As recently as 7 January 2013, eight mine workers lost their lives in another mine-related accident, which the President of your sister organization Genel Maden-Is correctly labelled as “killing” of mine workers.

As a matter of urgency, IndustriALL Global Union calls upon the Turkish government to immediately ratify and implement ILO’s Convention 176 on Safety and Health in Mines to save the lives of mine workers. The “killing” must stop. IndustriALL Global Union will do everything in their power to ensure that the Turkish government act responsibly and ratify Convention 176. We once again call upon the political authorities to take the lives of mineworkers seriously and to place it above profit."

“Turkish Government and employers have responsibility for this carnage,” said Kemal Özkan, IndustriALL Global Union’s assistant general secretary. “When governments fail to protect their citizens, it is not merely irresponsible; it is a breach of one of the most fundamental duties entrusted to any government. Turkey aspires to greatness, and it can achieve it: but not at the cost of workers’ lives.”

According to the official records, in 73 years more than 3000 miners have been killed in Turkey. We are watching in trepidation knowing that this accident has the potential to become the worst. Enough is enough, Turkey’s government must act now, my country’s miners cannot continue to pay with their lives for their inaction in dangerous mines.

*Press contacts:*

Kemal Özkan, +41-79-7349044

Tom Grinter, +41-79-6934499

---

## **CHRONOLOGY OF THE LAST 30 YEARS IN TURKEY’S MINES:**

7 March 1983: 103 killings in Armutçuk with methane explosion

10 April 1983: 10 killings in Kozlu with methane explosion

31 January 1987: 8 killings in Kozlu with dent

31 January 1990: 5 killings in Amasra with methane explosion

7 February 1990: 68 killings in Yeni Çeltik with methane explosion

3 March 1992: 263 killings in Kozlu with methane explosion

26 March 1995: 37 killings in Sorgun with methane explosion

22 November 2003: 10 killings in Ermenek with methane explosion

8 September 2004: 19 killings in Küre with fire

2 June 2006: 17 killings in Dursunbey with methane explosion

10 December 2009: 19 killings in Mustafakemalpaşa with methane explosion

17 May 2010: 30 killings in Zonguldak with methane explosion

8 January 2013: 8 killings in Kozlu with methane explosion

13 May 2014: 157 (so far killings) in Soma with fire

---

**P.S.**

\* <http://www.industrialunion.org/rising-death-toll-turns-mine-accident-in-turkey-to-carnage>