



Workers' Democracy Party, 17 May 2014

On Tuesday, May 13, hundreds of miners got trapped underground following a fire at a coalmine belonging to Soma Holding in Soma, a small town of 100,000 inhabitants in the city of Manisa in western Turkey, whose economy is primarily based on the mining industry. The rescue operation came to an end as of Saturday, May 17, and *Energy and Natural Resources Minister*

Taner Yıldız declared the final death toll to be 301 miners.

Even though the rescue operation ended, the fact that there are dozens of mining families who are still waiting in front of the mine or the hospital morgue with the hope to get information about their missing ones says otherwise. The contradiction between the official number of deaths declared by the government and the number of miners that are still missing suggests that the actual death toll reaches up to over 400 miners and that Minister Yıldız minimizes the number in order to cover up the actual gravity of the disaster. This only points out to the presence of temporary and subcontracted workers, who had been illegally employed by Soma Holding in the mine, during the disaster.

The night of the disaster, both the government and the Soma Holding authorities declared the cause of fire to be an electrical fault in the underground transformer causing an explosion which

disabled the ventilation system in the mine and led to carbon monoxide poisoning. However, a senior manager of Soma Holding contradicted this initial claim during a press conference held on Friday, May 16 and stated that the cause of fire was still “unknown.” Moreover, he also confessed that there were no safe rooms in the Soma coal mine, disproving the Soma Holding CEO Alp Gürkan’s previous claim from a year ago that the mine was one of the safest mines in Turkey which used the latest mining technology and which “had been fitted with life rooms.”

While the rescue operation was going on, it was disclosed that a recent call at the parliament for a safety inspection at the mines in Soma was rejected by the AKP deputies only two weeks ago, on April 29, based upon the claim by the AKP’s deputy of Manisa, Muzaffer Yurttas, that the mines in Turkey were safer compared to mines in most other countries around the world. What’s more, the disaster also revealed the Soma Holding Mine Enterprises’ close ties with the ruling AKP. For instance, Melike Dogru, the wife of the general director of the Soma Holding Mine Enterprises as well as the ex-administrative manager of the company, is the current regional councilor of the AKP. Furthermore, Soma Coal is known to be the provider of the charity coal bags distributed by the AKP during the local elections to recruit electoral support amongst the poor of the country. Moreover, Soma mine workers declared in a news coverage that they had been subjected to mobbing by the management that threatened the morning-shift workers to fire them if they refused to participate to the Manisa rally of the AKP, which was part of the electoral campaign for the last local elections.

All these facts point out that the disaster in Soma coalmine is not an unfortunate accident. It is an obvious workers’ massacre caused by the quest for profit of the capital, which considers work-security measures as mere cost factors, and not as nonnegotiable requirements to ensure workers’ health and safety. During the rule of the neoliberal AKP government, the subcontracting system and work insecurity have become state policies as exemplified by countless privatizations that took place in sectors such as education, health, forestry, mining and more. Under the AKP government, Turkey has consistently been among the top three in the list of countries by work-related accidents and deaths. **The AKP government, with all its neoliberal anti-worker policies, is the primary responsible of the Soma massacre!**

