

Lidl informs their employee of the termination of employment via the media

Unofficial translation from Slovenian by the Business & Human Rights Resource Centre.

In Lidl, union supporters are facing hard times. #WEAREALLTJAŠA

Ljubljana, March 3, 2020. The president of the LIDL Slovenia union and longtime manager in Lidl, Tjaša Kozole, is threatened with termination of employment, which she first officially learned about from the media. On Monday (March 2, 2020), the journalists of the weekly newspaper *Tednik* revealed the difficult working conditions faced by workers in the discount retail chains in our country. They also recorded a statement from a Lidl spokesman, who explained that in the past few days they have been trying to deliver to Tjaša "a written notice prior to regular termination for breaches of contractual obligations due to serious negligence" The Trade Union of Workers in trade sector of Slovenia (SDTS) is of the opinion that in Tjaša's case these are groundless allegations related to Tjaša's active role in the trade union and her efforts to improve the working conditions of Lidl employees. The SDTS therefore sided with LIDL Slovenia Union, which was formed just a year ago, and calls on the Lidl authorities to find a favorable solution to Tjaša's situation, as they can jointly prevent the termination of their employment contract through dialogue. Otherwise, Lidl will face protest rallies and a call for a boycott of Lidl shops by Slovenian consumers.

Why is Tjaša being threatened with dismissal?

More than a year ago, Tjaša Kozole, a mother of two children, a single mother, made the brave decision to organize female coworkers, and today she faces harassment and threats of termination of employment. In the past year, Tjaša has successfully strengthened the trade union, while at the same time, pressures from the employer have also been intensified, with the covert purpose of restricting her trade union work. "A union was formed in Lidl a good year ago, but instead of dialogue, pressures and threats are mounting," *Tednik* said. Tjaša told RTV¹ that they had set up LIDL Slovenia Union "in order to create a social dialogue with the company so that we can tell them about our problems, so that they hear us and so that we can solve the things that plague us together". Instead, they encountered deaf ears in the management, and in a year and a half of trying, they have not been able to meet with the management. "All of a sudden, since I've been in the union, my job grades have fallen, and I can barely pass. I have already received two written warnings for the wrong reasons and I am constantly under pressure from the management," explains Tjaša.

Tjaša has been employed at Lidl for nine years, and in the time before the union was established she was considered an exemplary worker who is carrying out the work as a store manager in a responsible manner. From the very beginning until the formation of the union, she successfully cooperated with the management of the company, but the relations between them significantly deteriorated after the union was formed. In the past three months, Tjaša has received two reminders already, which, according to *Tednik*, will be followed by written notice prior to regular dismissal for breaches of contractual obligations due to serious negligence.

The Trade Union of Worker's in trade sector Slovenia believes that the threats to terminate her employment contract are primarily linked to her proactive commitment to advocating for the respect of labour rights of her colleagues. The German discount chain LIDL is known throughout the world for its exceptional resistance to labour organizing (trade unions) and applies the same practice in our country. In accordance with national and international legal acts (from the UN, ILO, EU), the

¹ Slovenian National Television and Radio

establishment and operation of trade unions and the ability to freely join them is a fundamental human right.

In recent years, there has been an increase in cases of unlawful practices by employers with the aim of restricting union work, both in companies and in public institutions. We are facing threats of layoffs, harassment and the extreme measure of termination of an employment contract. In most cases, the court decides in favor of the workers' confidants [union representatives] that the company must re-employ them. Nevertheless, the purpose of the management is achieved and the damage is done, as usually, in the meantime, the union within the company dissolves. Likewise, these acts have negative consequences for both male and female union confidants [representatives], their physical and mental health, as well as for workers and their rights. It is a growing social and political problem that seeks to weaken or frustrate union organizing with the aim of constantly increasing profits and strengthening capital at the expense of diminishing workers' rights. The Trade Union of Worker's in trade sector Slovenia is strongly opposed to this and calls on the public to say together: NO! #WEAREALLTJAŠA

How will we help Tjaša?

The Trade Union of Slovenia has urged the leadership of the Lidl trade chain to engage in dialogue, but if they do not find a common language in the coming days, it will organize an extraordinary ZSSS² press conference, pointing to the pressing issue of harassment and dismissal of trade union confidants [representatives], thereby restricting freedom of trade union organizing and action. In the event of the termination of the employment contract against Tjaša Kozole, it will further urge the public to react massively and completely boycott Lidl Slovenia, as well as organize protest rallies in front of Lidl stores across Slovenia.

We are all Tjaša!

Attack on one is an attack on all!

For more information:

Ladi Rozic, Secretary of the Trade Union of Worker's in trade sector Slovenia

Tjaša Kozole, President of LIDL Slovenia Union

Cedar Research Committee

Source: <http://www.sindikatsdts.si/medijsko-sredisce/570-sporocilo-za-javnost-lidl-delavko-obvestil-o-odpovedi-kar-prek-medijev>

² Zveza svobodnih sindikatov Slovenije – The Association of Free Trade Unions of Slovenia