



NUMSA welcomes the raids on Tradecor Steel and other companies for flouting labour regulations by exploiting undocumented foreign nationals.

2 October 2024

Press statement

The National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA) welcomes the raid conducted by the Department of Home Affairs, the South African Police Services and the Department of Employment and Labour where they have been routinely raiding companies for not complying with labour regulations. The raids have also uncovered that many employers have been deducting UIF and not paying it over. This week NewzroomAfrika's [Nqobile Madlala](#) reported that Tradecor Steel was raided for allegedly flouting labour regulations. According to the news report, Tradecor was among the many companies that have been exposed for allegedly exploiting undocumented workers.

This comes as no surprise to us as NUMSA because we flagged this with the management in our attempts to engage Tradecor earlier this year. The management refused to recognise NUMSA as a bargaining agent, which is why we lodged a dispute at the CCMA for 'refusal to bargain'. Our members were preparing to strike because unfortunately we were unable to resolve the dispute through the CCMA. We are not surprised that Tradecor to learn that they are accused of failing to comply because they are abusing undocumented foreign nationals.

NUMSA is an internationalist trade union which is Marxist-Leninist inspired. We will always defend foreign nationals, against violence and exploitation. We believe in uniting the working class here in South Africa, on the continent, and all around the world. This is why we have working relationships with progressive working class movements all over the world.

Undocumented immigrants are vulnerable to exploitation because of their status. The bosses know that they are vulnerable and they exploit them by paying them very low salaries, whilst exposing them to shocking working conditions. Employers know that these workers are less likely to report them for gross violations, including health and safety violations in the workplace. It is also difficult for them to join unions because they do not have the right paper work and so this makes it easy for employers to abuse them. Often employers will attempt to downvary conditions by reducing wages, on the basis that they are paying undocumented foreign nations much lower rates. This is how the employer divides workers which is why, there is currently so much anger directed towards foreign nationals. It is important to understand that the bosses prefer a situation where there is high unemployment, so that they can justify paying low wages, in order to exploit workers. When workers turn their anger towards other workers, because they are immigrants, it benefits the bosses. They are distracting the working class by making them hate foreign nationals, as if they are to blame for this situation, when the reality is that it is the bosses who are to blame. They have created these conditions and they are benefitting.

NUMSA rejects attempts by employers to abuse foreign nationals in order to undermine the rights of workers. We have a responsibility to fight against those who seek to expose workers to super exploitation.

It is unfortunate that the Department of employment and Labour has historically ignored our pleas for them to conduct inspections on companies flouting the labour law. NUMSA has complained in the past against companies like SA Steel Mills in Sedibeng and Fortune Steel in Nigel, to name but a few. At some point Fortune Steel even had foreign workers sleeping on the premises in an attempt to undermine a strike, and we exposed them, but no action was taken by the department. We hope that the energy we have seen from the department in recent weeks, will continue.

We call on the department to go company by company and conduct inspections. We want to highlight the company VR Steel and Africa Steel and Tube as companies that the department must look into, including other companies in Ekurhuleni. We would call on them to finally take decisive action, in order to ensure that all employers adhere to the labour law when doing business in this country.

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