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Italy

Italian steel bosses do you think workers can fly!

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Another workplace death at the former Ilva steel plant in Taranto while production languishes and Minister Urso fails to act. Workers mobilise. Solidarity from Sinistra Anticapitalista

It is shameful to witness a series of fatal accidents that are almost identical. As far as we know, once again a “walkway collapsed”. It seems like bad luck, but obviously it is not. In the decades since the plant was built, other similar cases have occurred. In short, production is languishing, but preventable accidents (not mishaps) can no longer be classified as negligent. When accidents are repeated, then there is intent, because no action is taken to address the causes and it is not enough to issue statements of regret. Because, bosses and managers, you are responsible for the tragedies that occur.

Let us try to understand this latest leap into the void. The worker was ordered to go and remove ore, probably from under the rollers of a conveyor belt, which, incidentally, has been stationary for some time. And why is it stationary? Because production has been reduced to a minimum and two lines, D and E, of the plant are no longer used. So, what do they do? They abandon it; it is not important to maintain it, keep it ready for any eventuality. The line may have a long term defect so it needed fixing. Mineral dust then accumulates on the plant, weighing down the walkways with perforated gratings. Over time, more dust and other material settle on the gratings, which become heavy. Humidity and rain rots them, so that in the long run, they can no longer support even the slightest weight, such as that of a person who has to work on them.

Loris, who was working for an industrial cleaning contractor on the walkway was killed this week. Claudio, an Ilva worker, suffered the same accident and had no chance of escape 50 days earlier in another area of the works

What is infuriating is that just as these dramatic events are unfolding, the potential buyer of the company, Flackas Group (which, I would like to remind you, offered €1 for the purchase), is making the outrageous request for “criminal immunity”. Yes, they would like to protect themselves from any further accidents or the dumping of filth on the city. But the government is also collaborating, through Minister Urso, who is probably concerned that Mr Flacks will not be able to meet the costs of restructuring the plant. So the minister is once again exploring whether Jindal, the international steel giant might be interested in sharing the purchase of the Group. Remember, Jindal has already ruined the Piombino plant in Tuscany. Urso does not want the state to be directly involved in the refurbishment of the Taranto plant. This attitude is responsible for the decline of the plant and is leading to its closure.

The Taranto workers are incensed by yet another inexcusable death in the workplace and have responded immediately. The former ILVA workers mobilised with a 24-hour strike, including in Genoa and Racconigi. The day after the workplace fatality, the workers of the subcontracting companies stopped work. What was moving was the statement made by a worker at the company's factory gates: “We have launched a collection, of one day's pay, for those who want to contribute, to be donated to Loris's family”. The generosity of the working class is immense.

Only state intervention can protect against closure of the Taranto works. Stop the current lines, start the refurbishment and build new electric furnaces and the direct reduced iron processes. Everything else is just prolonging a plant that is no longer viable. In fact, as soon as the existing plant starts operating, it soon stops due to breakdowns.

Sinistra Anticapitalista (Anticapitalist Left) will support all initiatives that trade unions and workers wish to implement in order to seriously address the long-standing problem of safety at work.

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Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [Sinistra Anticapitalista](#).

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