

# Italy's Stellantis workers prepare for one-day national strike

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*Are you a Stellantis worker? Fill out the form at the end of this article for information about building rank-and-file committees to fight the global jobs massacre.*

Autoworkers at global carmaker Stellantis and its suppliers are set to strike Friday and hold a national demonstration in Rome to oppose job cuts. Last month, under enormous pressure from rank-and-file workers, the leaders of the Fim-Cisl, Fiom-Cgil and Uilm-Uil unions said they would hold a one-day strike after reporting plummeting production volumes in Italy.

In the first half of the year, the French-Italian-American conglomerate reduced output by 25 percent in Italy, according to data from Fim-Cisl. The union says it expects Stellantis to produce just over half a million vehicles this year, down from 751,000 in 2023.

The threat of plant closures and job cuts in Italy are part of a global cost-cutting campaign, including the elimination of the jobs of 2,400 workers at the Stellantis Warren Truck plant in suburban Detroit last week.

In its statement released on Wednesday, Stellantis said it planned to “ensure the continuity” of its Italian operations but warned that it was facing “a challenging path requiring difficult choices and offering no easy solutions.” Earlier in the week, CEO Carlos Tavares said he was “not ruling out” further job cuts.

The company employs approximately 43,000 workers in Italy, with about 28,500 of them being factory workers. These employees work primarily in assembly plants located in Mirafiori (Turin), Modena, Cassino, Pomigliano, Melfi and Atessa. The company produces a variety of vehicles, including commercial models like the Fiat Ducato, Citroën Jumper and Peugeot Boxer at its Atessa plant, as well as electric and traditional vehicles across its other Italian facilities?

Thousands of workers employed by the auto company and its suppliers are concerned because the massive state funds that Stellantis has received, including redundancy funds (*Cassa Integrazione*) and other similar programs, are running out in the coming months. As many as 25,000 jobs could be lost.

CEO Tavares wasted no time in retaliating and, only a few days after the strike announcement, agreed to meet with the 10th Parliamentary Commission on Productive Activities on October 11, in a clear attempt to derail the planned industrial action.

Tavares was defiant and, while raising concerns about China's competitive electric vehicles, he continued his previous policy of blackmailing governments to obtain further subsidies. “In Italy the costs are too high, for example, energy costs are double those in Spain. You have to explain to me how to manage this problem. ... We are not asking for money for ourselves,” said Tavares. “We are asking for help for your citizens so that they can afford to buy electric

vehicles. The support we are talking about is to make these models accessible.”

The immediate reaction of union officials was to express their concern that they had not been invited to the table. Instead, Tavares met with only a few minor union leaders separately the same day he met with the governmental committee. The overriding fear of the trade union bureaucracy is that workers' anger could break free from its control.

On September 30, Tavares said the company was slashing its earnings forecast, following a July announcement that the automaker's first-half net profits were down nearly 50 percent. The purpose was clearly aimed at intimidating workers worldwide and gaining leverage against governments. In particular, the reports of plummeting profits are aimed at preparing the ground for additional restructuring measures, especially in the US, where the UAW bureaucracy has been Stellantis' preferred partner in the recent layoff of thousands of workers at Warren Truck, as well as at other factories. Italian workers are next in Tavares' target sights.

The Italian confederated unions are using the strike to disarm workers, not to embolden them. While they limit the action to one day, they continue to issue nationalist appeals to Stellantis' CEO and to fascist Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni. This is an attempt to subordinate workers to the needs of stockholders, who are complaining about a steep decline in stock values (from \$29.36 last March to \$12.91 as of last Tuesday).

“In recent months we have repeatedly asked for a meeting with all institutional and business interlocutors at the highest level, up to directly involving the CEO and the prime minister. So much so that we are engaged in an important strike and national demonstration initiative in Rome on October 18, throughout the sector,” the union officials wrote in a joint statement.

This is a clear olive branch to the multinational corporation and the state: The purpose of the strike, according to the union bureaucracy, is not to address workers' needs but to facilitate an agreement between Tavares and Meloni on how much workers should pay for a crisis that is not of their making.

A major global restructuring of Stellantis is already taking shape through which finance capital is demanding mass layoffs and job cuts, regardless of the consequences for thousands of working class families. While the company announced that Tavares may soon be replaced, other corporate leaders are set to take over as axe wielders.

In Italy, Tavares appointed Antonella Bruno as Managing Director responsible for 10 brands of cars (Abarth, Alfa Romeo, Citroen, DS Automobiles, Fiat, Jeep, Lancia, Opel, Peugeot and Leapmotor) and four brands of commercial vehicles (Citroen, Fiat Professional, Opel

and Peugeot). Her managerial history, from Ford to Fiat, from Lancia to Jeep and Peugeot, is a clear warning to all autoworkers that her role will be to meet the needs of stockholders, not workers.

All this makes it more urgent than ever to organize independent rank-and-file committees to take the control of the struggle out of the hands of the pro-corporate, nationalist union bureaucracy and reach out to all other sections of the working class, in Italy and abroad, to organize an all-out fight against multinational corporations and the state.

At Cassino, one of the plants to be called out on strike, 7 million vehicles have been produced for Fiat since 1972, primarily the Lancia and Alfa Romeo. Currently, the Alfa Romeo Giulia and Stelvio, as well as the Maserati Grecale, are still in production.

The WSWS spoke to Rita Di Fazio, a worker at the Cassino plant, about the strike. He said:

It will surely be a great strike, but one that arrives enormously late. In the last 13 years no real struggle has taken place, I mean a real conflict in the true sense of the word, within the world of exploitation. Moreover, a strike must be called with proposals that come from the rank and file. Instead, no assembly has been held among workers within the industry that has produced proposals from a working class base.

The strike will be a political catwalk. I wouldn't be surprised if even Tavares and Meloni will be there. On Monday, we will go back to work under the same conditions, at the same pace. This strike is guided from the top. Our proposals are of another kind, having heard the workers. Stellantis has already decided to leave Italy in two years. We should work to nationalize it. Government after government has given money to corporations for 50 years without having a real study, a proposal for the future.

Asked about layoffs in the US following last year's United Auto Workers agreement, Di Fazio said:

What the UAW has done in the United States does not surprise me. But so brazenly and shamelessly? They have not even done it in Italy on such a national scale; they have always tried to conceal it. They [union bureaucracies] have always deployed the semblance of a fake defense, a semblance of a demonstration, like the one taking place with the strike in Italy this coming Friday. I believe that in the United States a new form of trailblazing is taking place with what Stellantis is doing and that will then be exported here. I am absolutely convinced of it. In my opinion they are studying a new sociopolitical method, a new form of corporate policy, because the union bureaucracy is so brazen in its collusion.

It's that collusion that took place with Marchionne: They pretend to clean up the union leadership; then the one that comes in is even more capitalist than the one before. And therefore, I tell you, at least union-wise we are looking at the United States because this form will certainly be brought here and a lot depends on how the working class will respond to this shameful attitude of these pseudo unions.

Asked about a strategy to unite workers internationally and coordinate their struggles to defend jobs across national borders, Di Fazio continued:

Here, the only ones who do not see it yet are us workers. Internationalism today is a fact. Big finance is very united, very cohesive, they do not discriminate between themselves, they do not care when it comes to money. Sooner or later this awareness will have to be borne also within us. But it is not easy, however, to combine and unite so many forces. It is not only geographical distance. To do this there must be a social and political culture of self-sacrifice, and it is not easy. Internationalism is fundamental. If the enemy you have to fight is already international, you also need to become international. While the boss speaks the same language and uses the same tools everywhere, the language of the exploited is unfortunately heterogenous.

Addressing workers in the United States, Di Fazio concluded:

You are making history. You must be aware that today you are truly being watched by the entire industrial world. I'm sorry you must feel this social burden. You are starting to give life to a historical turning point in finance capitalism, and you should not believe that these wars are not the reason for it. These wars that have broken out over economics, both the one in Israel and the Middle East, financed for a lifetime [by the US], and that with Russia. I therefore hope that US workers realize that unfortunately you are the guinea pigs of a new form of more ruthless, more brazen capitalism, where they pretend to put you at the center of everything, when in fact they are only subjugating you more.

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