

# More miners die, others left unpaid, as Russia's workers pay the price for war economy

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Three workers were killed in a gold mine collapse in the Russian Far East last Thursday. Their crushed bodies were pulled out of the Kumroch mine in Ust-Kamchatsky District in Kamchatka with the help of a specialized team.

The following day, the general director of the operation, which is owned by the Bistrinskaya Mining Company (BGK), denied that there had been a rockfall at all, claimed that the cause of the miners' deaths was still unknown, and insisted that there is no danger in the other shafts nearby. They remain open and active. The authorities quickly issued insipid statements about launching an investigation into what happened and holding accountable those who were responsible.

One victim was a 36-year-old father of four from Bakal, a small town of just 20,000 in the Ural Mountains. Over the weekend, Evgeniy Loginovsky's wife flew about 3,500 miles to collect his remains from the mining operation, where he had been employed away from his family since 2022. Loginovsky was a miner for 17 years. No other information is available about the others killed.

The Kumroch mine, which recently opened and will become fully operational in 2026, is capable of producing 600,000 tons of ore per year, with a yield of 4 tons of gold annually. While prices for the precious metal vary constantly, based on recent averages, such a volume would generate somewhere between \$200-\$250 million a year. If the Kumroch operation is able to deliver the expected 4 tons, it will increase the Kamchatka region's gold production, which rose last year by nearly one-third, another 50 percent. In 2018, a study determined that the mine sits atop 48.8 tons of gold reserves, although other estimates have come in lower.

Government agencies have been pouring money into the operation. The mine's parent company, BGK, recently

signed further agreements securing federal level support for its work at the Eastern Economic Forum held in September. The state-funded Far East and Arctic Development Corporation is a major investor.

The development of the Kumroch mine is part of the efforts by the Kremlin, which just announced another huge increase in security expenditures, to rapidly expand the country's military-industrial complex as it confronts the relentless attempt by the US and NATO to break up and subjugate Russia. This expansion—the ultimate goal of which is not to defend the Russian working class against imperialism but to secure the ability of Russia's capitalist class to exploit the population—happens at the expense of the masses.

Social programs are being cut and working conditions are worsening because of labor shortages and the mad dash to bring online new enterprises. This occurs on top of an industrial base that was already extremely dangerous for workers because former Soviet bureaucrats and their heirs ravaged it for decades. Having restored capitalism in the USSR, they went on to squeeze out every dime they could regardless of the human consequences.

In another manifestation of the reality in Russia's industrial workplaces, Siberian miners started a hunger strike this week over the non-payment of their wages. The owner of Inskaya Mine in Kemerovo has not given them their earnings in three months. Three hundred eighty-two workers are due 46 million rubles (\$475,000) from owner Denis Nemikin, who insists that he cannot pay because of the firm's bankruptcy. Thus far, 12 miners have signed the statement declaring their intent to refuse food until they get what they are owed.

The government, according to press reports, is "monitoring" the situation. Despite the fact that miners

initially reported the non-payment of their wages in July, the authorities have taken no action apart from telling the mine owner to indicate what measures are being taken to resolve the situation. The official statistical agency for the Kemerovo region is not even keeping a record of the arrears at the Inskaya mine, as they claim that wage arrears in the entire region, which is just around 37,000 square miles, for all workers is no more than 5 million rubles.

At a meeting with the miners on Monday, Nemikin appealed to them to go back to work in order to ensure the firm's "viability" and stated that he had previously "gifted" them nine months of their salary. In response, the workers made clear that they do not labor for free and also noted that they cannot use the mine's equipment, which is so outdated that it is no longer functional. No doubt they know the dangers this entails and do not wish to share the same fate as their fellow workers at the Kumroch mine on Thursday.

The slaughterhouse in which Russia's miners labor is the reality for workers across the country, as it is around the world. A review of press accounts published just between October 8 and October 18 alone reveals at least 23 industrial deaths. Workers are flattened, crushed, buried alive and chewed up.

Last Friday, a 23-year-old construction worker in Nizhniy Novgorod died from falling off a 25-story building. The same day in northeast Moscow, a laborer taking his rest break leaned against a brick wall at a construction site and plunged four stories to his death. In Ryazan, a forklift driver died during loading operations. On October 17, a 50 year old perished while cleaning a concrete mixer at an asphalt factory near Saratov. The same day, a worker did not survive after being caught in a tractor wheel at a sugar factory in Ulyanovsk. Someone else died in Baranul in Altai, having plunged 6 stories while doing installation work. And in Vladivostok, the life of a 23-year-old construction worker ended when he fell into an elevator shaft.

On October 16 in Saratov, a man was "buried alive" while replacing pipeline. On October 15, someone died at the Yakovlevsky Mining and Processing Plant, an iron ore extractor. The same day in Samara a road worker was run over by a KamAz truck. Two days earlier, a 38 year old laying cable in the region of Svobodensky ended up with multiple tons of sand and gravel on top of him and never made it out. Around the same time, the gates at a vegetable storehouse in Nizhniy Novgorod closed on an employee, crushing him to death.

On October 12, a building collapsed in Moscow during the construction of a new business center, and one worker died, while another was stuck under the rubble. On October 10, one miner was killed, and one had to be rescued at the Mokhovskiy mine in Siberia. The same day, a man was caught in a rockfall while working underground in Belgorod Oblast. On October 9, a man of 44 years died at an aluminum factory in Irkutsk. One day prior, another was flattened doing tunneling work at the Denisovskiy Vostochny coal operation in Yakutia. The same day a welder in Rostov fell and died.

Among the dead are children. In Iskitim, a small city of 60,000 in Novosibirsk, a 16 year old was "eaten" by a machine while trying to rescue his co-worker—himself just 22 years old—from being sucked into a conveyor belt at a quarry operation. The boy had only completed the ninth grade. "Just his legs were sticking out," said one of his coworkers. The foreman and director have been detained for negligence.

In April of this year, 13 miners in Amur oblast were killed by a mine collapse that trapped them 30 stories underground.

The list goes on and on. And this does not include the endless injuries that workers suffer, many of which prove to be fatal in the near- and long-term. In every case, safety violations and corruption are discovered. On occasion a handful of people are tried for their crimes, and some fines are issued, but the whole situation continues as before.

In November 2021, 51 people died as the result of a methane explosion at the Listvyazhnaya mine in Kuzbass. On October 16 of this year—that is, three years later—the trial of the government officials who falsified documents and took bribes to look the other way during inspections is just now beginning. On October 18, the wife of a miner killed 11 years ago in an explosion that ended the lives of 18 people just now received an additional payout from the firm, the product of a lawsuit she initiated. After dragging out the investigation for six years, authorities closed the government case on the grounds that the statute of limitations had been reached.



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