

Geneva, 06 March 2020

Mr Regis Blugeon
Directeur des affaires sociales et DRH
Group Saint-Gobain
Via email: regis.blugeon@saint-gobain.com

IndustriALL Global Union urges Saint-Gobain to accept its liability over dismissal of sick worker for absenteeism in India

Dear Mr Blugeon,

On behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industriall-union.org), representing more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors throughout the world, including Saint-Gobain workers worldwide, we would like to bring to your attention this particular case of Mr Jayaraj Mathangi, a former Saint-Gobain Crystals and Detectors' worker in Bangalore, India.

Mr Jayaraj Mathangi (35 years old) is suffering from severe health problems due to hazards he was exposed to while working for the company. Despite his health situation, he was fired in July 2016 after many years of service. We strongly support Jayaraj's demands to obtain his reinstatement and compensation for lost health.

Jayaraj Mathangi first joined Saint-Gobain Crystals and Detectors company in Bangalore at the end of August 2008. He was offered a position as a trainee and after completion of a three-year training period was employed in February 2011 as a production technician in the quality control department.

During his training period, Jayaraj Mathangi's job was to check some 300-400 cadmium crystals per day used in the production of scintillation detectors. To test and calibrate the detectors, workers used Caesium-137, a radioactive element, with a known-strength radiation emission. Both cadmium compounds, and radiation emitted by the Caesium source, are extremely hazardous and must be handled with the utmost care and control.

A year after starting work, Jayaraj Mathangi noted a serious deterioration in his health. From 2012 onwards, he suffered headaches, pain and numbness in his legs, which increasingly persisted the whole day. He informed the management a number of times of his health issues but no action was taken.

Jayaraj Mathangi's tests revealed the cadmium level in his blood was three or four times the acceptable limit. Besides a high cadmium level, blood tests also showed a high red blood count, high lymphocytes, abnormal glucose levels, and low levels of vitamin D and calcium. The doctors also found that he suffered from bronchitis, muscle cramps and bone softening.

Many of these conditions can be caused by or exacerbated by cadmium toxicity and / or radiation. Jayaraj Mathangi has been in continued treatment until the present, but he was fired in 2016 on the grounds of long absenteeism. In addition to his job, he lost his employee health insurance, which also covered his dependent parents and wife.

Earlier we also informed you that in 2012 workers tried to set up a union at Saint-Gobain Crystals and Detectors. Among other issues the newly created organization tried to address the health and safety situation in the factory, including Jayaraj Mathangi's case. Management dismissed workers who were part of the trade union, while other workers were offered slight pay rises in exchange for a written renunciation of any future union activities. Workers at the company remain without union representation.

In the absence of union representation or a joint health and safety body representing workers' interests, the situation at the company has not improved. Eventually, the company managers were convicted by the Bangalore court and fined, following state inspections in 2009 and 2016. The inspection report made reference to Jayaraj Mathangi's case and confirmed that excessive levels of cadmium were found in the blood of many workers in the cadmium processing department.

While visiting the company, the national Atomic Energy Regulatory Board inspector noted that although radiation levels were low, workers were noticed handling sealed lead containers of radioactive materials with their bare hands. The inspector issued the recommendation to use forceps. Jayaraj Mathangi reports that during the inspection only safety conditions related to the radiation sources were checked. These had been improved not long before the inspection, based on his earlier complaint. The inspector did not visit the quality control department and therefore could not see the poor safety working conditions there.

According to your publicly declared [General Principles of Conduct and Action](#), Saint-Gobain commits "*to take particular care to adopt all measures necessary to ensure the best possible protection against health and safety risks in the workplace*". At the same time Saint-Gobain Group companies "*must scrupulously ensure that employees' rights are respected. They must promote an active dialogue with their employees.*" None of these principles were applied at Saint-Gobain Crystals and Detectors in Bangalore.

Therefore, we urge you to accept your liability on this case, and carry out a proper investigation of the problems identified and take adequate measures to redress the situation, including but not limited to:

- reinstatement of Jayaraj Mathangi to his job with payment of his lost income including all due increments, arrears, bonuses and other benefits since July 2016,
- payment of adequate medical compensation to Jayaraj Mathangi.
- investigation of the situation at the factory to eliminate health hazards related to exposure to cadmium and radioactive materials.
- allowing workers to freely organize, form and join the union of their choice.

Looking forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,



Valter Sanches, General Secretary

cc. Dominique Bousquenaud, Coordinator of the Saint- Gobain Global Union Network:
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