

## **THE AUSTRAL OPINION**

Sanctions against independently organized workers - National and Provincial AOMA seeks to unlock the conflict in the San José mine

Opinion Austral from Rio Gallegos published October 15th,2009

The Santa Cruz branch of the Mine Workers Association of Argentina (AOMA), headed by Javier Castro, decided in a meeting that it would initiate a strike of activities while it seeks to negotiate with the Minera Santa Cruz company, which owns and operates the mine near San José in Perito Moreno, to lift the sanctions on independently organized workers involved in serious incidents within the mine.

The incidents occurring between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> of September led to Minera Santa Cruz filing a criminal complaint in the court of Las Heras on October 6<sup>th</sup> against the perpetrators of these incidents.

The incidents that led to the current situation began on September 22<sup>nd</sup> when a group of independently organized workers, acting outside and independently from the labor union to which they belong, seized the San José mine thereby ignoring the mandatory dispute resolution process imposed by the provincial Ministry of Labor and Social Security.

After seizing the mine, the independently organized workers carried out a series of unusually violent acts both against senior staff and co-workers who refused to join them, these actions resulted in the aforementioned criminal complaint made by Minera Santa Cruz against these independently organized workers in the court of Las Heras, which complaint alleges threats, bodily and real property harm, and unlawful restraint. According to a source at Minera Santa Cruz, “out of respect for the workers who were assaulted and in order to maintain civilized living conditions, and after identifying with certainty the instigators of the riots, the company decided to sanction them according to their level of responsibility, and although Minera Santa Cruz respect a workers right to strike, we repudiate the illegality of this strike and will not endorse violence that puts at risk the security of our employees”.

The local AOMA group seeking negotiations with Minera Santa Cruz was joined on Tuesday afternoon by Héctor Laplace, the general secretary of the national AOMA. By the time this article was going to print the meeting continued with closed doors. An anonymous union source confided that the AOMA was “cautiously optimistic”.

### **SANTA CRUZ**

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