

**Mining (Argentina)**  
Minera Santa Cruz Awaits Conflict Resolution  
Tense watch and wait for a solution to the mining conflict  
The Austral Newspaper

*El Periódico Austral from Rio Gallegos, published on Oct 16.*

For more than 48 hours the situation in the San José-Huevos Verdes conflict has worsened.

After Minera Santa Cruz decided to sanction a group of independently organized workers involved in the serious incidents occurring on the premises of its San José mine between the 22<sup>nd</sup> and the 24<sup>th</sup> of September and which led the company to file a criminal complaint against said workers in the court of Las Heras on October 6<sup>th</sup>, the Santa Cruz branch of the Mine Workers Association of Argentina (AOMA), which is headed by Javier Castro, decided in a meeting to initiate a labor strike while they negotiate with the company to lift the sanctions.

Faced with an escalation of the “sparks” that have complicated the relationship between the parties for almost the past month, the “Instigator” spoke via telephone with Javier Castro in the early afternoon yesterday and it was said that “we are in a recess, we are seeking to find middle ground and we have good prospects, we have been on strike for 48 hours in response to the company having made 52 layoffs and 25 suspensions. AOMA has intervened in the matter, work at the mine is at a standstill and we are negotiating for the reinstatement of as many workers as possible”.

**“Independently Organized Workers”**

Immediately afterwards, the unionist indicated that “the company has made clear that during the events that occurred those days there were people who went to far and who acted as independently organized workers, which would plausibly merit a significant sanction, the company says they will provide evidence and will not only maintain the suspension and layoffs but they also intend to continue with legal proceedings. We reject this position and are at the forefront of the situation defending the workers’.

Javier Castro said “we hope the problem is solved soon because with already two days of standstill at the mine at some point there could be a cost to the workers. We see that there is willingness to find a quick solution but it was necessary to involve AOMA because there are a lot of people involved in this situation.”

Upon consulting the unionist for the miners on whether they should reconsider some extremely violent methods that are being used in some demands, demands which may very well be valid but run the risk of being invalidated because of such actions, Castro said “it is a difficult question to answer because if one acts in a calm and peaceful manner they run the risk of ‘planting seeds of doubt’ and generating all types of comments,” such as, “in the best case, he has ‘given in’ or worse, he has ‘sold out,’” noting that “if, on the contrary, tougher and uncompromising positions are taken one is quickly labeled ‘crazy’, therefore I have no doubt that it is difficult to find a balance that puts us on a path together with our fellow workers but makes us appear as ‘bandits’ to the other side putting at risk our source of work”.

The AOMA unionist said that “in Santa Cruz we have 850 mining colleagues, with 850 families,” noting that “we cannot put everything at risk because of a group of 10 or 15 misfits, it is hard and challenging work and we have great responsibility. We are on the right track and we need to foster good will, when the time comes for the Government to take part they must be responsible and see who we are defending, the good guys or the bad guys, for these reasons we are convinced that a lot of things can be achieved with dialogue and struggle conducted coherently and on the right principles. We are living in violent and dangerous times and that can lead us to make mistakes we might regret for a long time, without a doubt this is a clear example: jeopardizing the source of employment for 850 people for a minimal demand that was made in a violent manner”.

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