



WORKERS ACTION GROUP

SOLIDARITY AGAINST AUSTERITY

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Solidarity with illegally terminated Mugshots bar workers!

September 12, 2015 -- The Workers Action Group (WAG) expresses our support for the struggle of the former workers of the Mugshots Bar in the Ottawa Jail Hostel (OJH) – a component of Hostelling International. In July, 5 workers were - in our view - wrongfully dismissed and many more were disrespected and subject to the blatant disregard for workers' rights by management when OJH abruptly decided to shut down Mugshots Bar.

The closure of Mugshots was a surprise to many supporters in the Ottawa community and it came as a complete shock to all the workers who lost their jobs. We recognize and applaud the actions of the workers who remain united in their effort to hold the OJH and specific management accountable for their unjust actions. It appears that the OJH and their management believed they could exploit and disrespect these workers with impunity.

The former workers at Mugshots Bar are trying to ensure that what happened to them will not happen to other workers and WAG supports them in this effort. Capitalism relies on the ability of employers to render workers disposable and is striving for a permanent precarious workforce to be manipulated. Workers without living wages, saddled with student debt, without permanent immigration status or trade union representation are rendered vulnerable and taught they have no power to confront the exploitation they experience. What happened to the Mugshots workers is not unique in Ottawa or elsewhere. We draw inspiration from the commitment of these workers to realize justice in this case and hope it will serve as a lesson for other bosses who abuse their power and an example of what is possible when workers unite to fight.

We offer our support and solidarity to these former workers as they demand that OJH heed the entirely legitimate demands for just compensation, an apology and a commitment that this will never happen again. We echo their call for certain Mugshots management to be fired, and for all future OJH workers to be provided with detailed information about their basic legal rights at work. They must also be informed as to how to and how to exercise these rights. Finally, we support their demand for an independent third party compliance audit to be conducted and published, verifying that the organization is respecting all basic employment standards and health and safety legislation.

Workers Action Group (WAG), a project of Solidarity Against Austerity a broad Ottawa area network of community, student, labour, peace, environmental and anti-poverty activists. WAG was established in recognition of the need for more militant and rank and file oriented labour movement organizing in our region. We see austerity policies as targeting the working class in all its diversity, with particularly harmful effects on women, racialized peoples, indigenous peoples, people with disabilities, and other oppressed groups. If this sounds good to you, join us!