

Campaign on Hyundai to Stop Anti-Foreigner Law in America

Background

Hyundai in the American State of Alabama

Hyundai operates a large factory in the American state of Alabama. In January, 2012 alone, Hyundai sold 25,309 Sonatas and Elantras which were built in Alabama. Together with part suppliers, Hyundai is a major employer in the state of Alabama.

Hyundai built their Alabama plant after securing lucrative tax benefits from the government of Alabama.

Hyundai and other manufacturers have located their factories in Alabama because the state has some of the worst labor protections in America. Alabama is a small state in America most famous for bloody protests in the 1960s over civil and human rights.

New Alabama Law Mistreats People of Different Ethnic Backgrounds

In the state of Alabama, officials created a new law to intimidate immigrant workers and ethnic minorities to scare them out of the state.

The law has received worldwide attention and has been condemned by the United Nations for violating international human rights standards. The law also breaks with the U.N. Global Compact that Hyundai has signed which calls on businesses to "develop an awareness of human rights and to work within their sphere of influence to uphold these universal values, on the basis that responsibility falls to every individual in society. The second principle continues by stating, "businesses should make sure they are not complicit in human rights abuses," including through silence or inaction.

Thousands of children have disappeared from schools and tens of thousands of immigrant families have fled the state in fear. The state has refused to serve some immigrant families with water to their homes and to provide medical care to the sick.

Hyundai has remained silent.

Hyundai Refuses to Help Combat Racist State Law

Hyundai holds significant political and economic power in the state of Alabama. Government officials say that if Hyundai and other foreign companies used their power, the racist HB 56 law would be rejected.

Labor unions and organizations representing Asian American, African American, Latino, Christian and other groups have asked to meet with Hyundai leaders to gain their support but Hyundai has refused.

Instead, Hyundai officials have threatened to retaliate against organizations representing Americans of different ethnic backgrounds.

Timeline

In a letter dated Jan. 19, 2012, leaders of 14 organizations requested a meeting with top Hyundai executives to discuss the human rights violations. Our request was refused.

Just before a press call on Feb. 6, 2012, in which the labor and civil rights coalition's letter was publicly announced, Hyundai contacted one of the groups to offer a meeting. However, the offer was rescinded. A full-page advertisement in the Montgomery Advertiser on Feb. 9, 2012 explained the need for major foreign automakers in Alabama, including Hyundai, to call for repeal of HB 56.

On Feb. 22 and 23, 2012, there were three developments. The coalition received a letter from a Hyundai representative in the U.S., which ignored our request for a meeting. We also waged informational actions at Honda auto dealerships in the suburbs of Los Angeles, Chicago and Detroit and in the cities of Los Angeles and Miami since Honda is a major foreign automaker in Alabama as well. At the same time, Hyundai dealerships in the U.S. received memos from headquarters warning of the informational actions and directing dealerships to direct any questions about HB56 to the Alabama state Legislature, again refusing to acknowledge Hyundai's important role in this matter.

More recently, a company representative told CNN on February 29, 2012 that Hyundai "does not take a position on the immigration law one way or the other." Hyundai's decision to endorse the status quo in Alabama is unacceptable.

Now, a delegation of civil and human rights and labor leaders have traveled the globe to personally deliver a message to Hyundai shareholders in Seoul, South Korea.

Next, organizations involved with this effort plan to heavily publicize Hyundai's response to this request to the millions of members of their constituencies.