

Amazon workers demand end to union-busting tactics

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Christian Smalls, president of the Amazon Labor Union, leads protestors in a march on September 5, 2022 in New York City. (Photo: Michael M. Santiago/Getty Images)

New York, November 30 (RHC)-- Amazon CEO Andy Jassy is set to be met on Wednesday by workers from his company's first unionized warehouse when he arrives at a New York Times event, as the Amazon Labor Union calls on him to support negotiations for a fair contract for the people who help make sure billions of products are delivered by the company each year.

Members of the union, which is headed by former warehouse worker Christian Smalls, plan to rally at Lincoln Center where Jassy is speaking at the Times' DealBook Summit. The summit features talks by "high-level executives and emerging leaders" from sectors including financial services, media, private investment, venture capital, and banking.

"If Jassy comes to New York he should come to bargain a contract with Amazon workers, not bluster or practice union-busting," Smalls said in a statement. "It's time that Amazon and the company's CEO respect the rights of workers and join ALU in improving working conditions rather than acting as an

uncaring, B.S.-spouting, corporate law-breaker."

Jassy's appearance comes as the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) is expected to certify the ALU's historic union election, which took place in April. In September, the NLRB "overruled in their entirety" Amazon's objections to the union vote, and earlier this month, District Judge Diane Gujarati of the Eastern District of New York filed a nationwide cease-and-desist order, requiring the company to stop firing workers for engaging in union activity and interfering with employees' rights.

The cease-and-desist order was handed down in the case of Gerald Bryson, an employee who was fired in April 2020 for protesting with his co-workers over unsafe working conditions at the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic.

In a press statement, the ALU noted on Monday that the NLRB specifically cited Jassy for violating labor rights. The CEO said in TV interviews that if Amazon workplaces unionize, the company could become "more bureaucratic" and "much slower." The board scheduled a hearing on Jassy's comments for February.

Amazon has so far stopped workers at two other warehouses in New York from unionizing, as well as one in Bessemer, Alabama. The company faces numerous allegations of intimidating workers, calling the police on union organizers on multiple occasions in at least two states, and otherwise retaliating against workers for participating in union activity.

The day after the ALU is set to protest at the DealBook Summit, Amazon managers at JFK8—the warehouse where Smalls led his former co-workers to vote in favor of unionizing in April—will distribute and publicly read out Gujarati's 30-page ruling, detailing the rights of workers at the facility.

The judge's decision stipulated that the readout take place, with an NLRB official monitoring. Amazon could be held in contempt of court if managers do not read and distribute the ruling. "The judge's order in this case recognizes Amazon's unlawful conduct and provides the full force of a federal court injunction to prohibit Amazon from further discharging employees for engaging in protected concerted activity," said Teresa Poor, regional director for the Brooklyn office of the NLRB.

"This relief is critical to ensure that Amazon employees can fully and freely exercise their rights to join together and improve their working conditions, including by forming, assisting, or joining a union," added Poor.

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