

Chilean copper workers begin national strike

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Codelco, one of the largest copper mining companies in the world, goes on strike due to smelter closure. Jun. 21, 2022. | Photo: Twitter/@MedioNoticias

Santiago de Chile, June 23 (RHC)-- In Chile, workers at the state-owned company Corporación del Cobre (Codelco) began a national strike following the closure of a smelting plant.

"Codelco workers have initiated a national strike to reverse the decision of the government and Codelco's board regarding the closure of the Ventanas smelter," according to the Chilean Copper Workers Federation (FTC).

Employees are concerned about the future of their jobs, despite the government's assurances that they will not be laid off but relocated. "With the strength and unity of the workers, we will achieve, through this struggle, our objective, which is to allow the Ventanas foundry to continue melting wealth and progress for Chile sustainably and responsibly with people and the environment," the Federation said.

The FTC leader, Amador Pantoja, said that the purpose of the strike is not only to reverse the decision but also "to achieve investments so that Chilean copper can continue to be smelted and refined."

The president of the Federation of Copper Workers (FTC), Amador Pantoja, said: "Today all the divisions of Codelco have stopped, this participation involves 40 000, 50 000 workers, between own and contractors."

Codelco's workers said that all the company's divisions would be affected as the strike is total. According to them, 26 of the company's 27 unions have joined the pressure action. Hundreds of external companies related to Codelco will also join the strike; the strike leaders told local media.

The company's board of directors' decision to close the Ventanas smelter was announced last week by President Gabriel Boric on the grounds that in recent decades there have been frequent episodes of intoxication among the population of the Valparaíso region, where the smelter is located.

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