

Letter from Radek

There were plenty of reasons to protest. These are the most important ones:

- Firstly - they took away our basic rights: the right to feel safe, the right to work in acceptable conditions, the right to enforce basic provisions of the agreement between the employer and the employee.
- Mobbing was also an issue – Poles and other immigrants were discriminated against.
- State institutions, the police, etc. did not offer any help.

The goal of this protest was to:

- Attract the attention of the media and other relevant institutions, to the conditions, migrant workers have to work in; because of their financial situation, they're forced to participate in slavelike work, they're cheated on by their employers and job agents, they're being wrecked both physically and psychologically.
- Bring out the social differences that exist between immigrants and those better off Dutch citizens. These differences can be well seen in work places, where double standards are being applied, for „the visitors” and for the Dutchmen.
- Force relevant institutions to inspect the Dutch labour market. The verb „to force”, was used deliberately, because none of the legal actions I have taken before the incident – against the unlawfulness that I had stumbled upon – worked.

Employers in the Netherlands commonly violate the health and safety rules in regard to labour immigrants. The people who get hurt during working hours, are not only – not getting their insurance money, but are also being fired during their convalescence. There is also a lot of effort being put into not paying out workers' insurance. When a worker gets hurt, those in power dismiss such a person without a specific reason – which is of course against the law. After that, the person is being evicted out of the „location” (living accommodation), very often with the help of the police. This fired worker then becomes homeless and loses his livelihood; and because of his lack of knowledge of the law, and because of the situation that he's in – he loses the possibility to challenge his ex-employers' decision. Yet even if he does succeed in referring the matter to the labour inspection department, the institution doesn't do anything about it and dismisses the case.

Such situations occur commonly – it's also the exact thing that happened to me. During my convalescence, my employer fired me – unlawfully of course. He then sent two job agents, straight from the employment agency bureau – to my apartment (for which I paid 90€ weekly). The job I took, was given to me by the **E&A job agency**; although my employers were **XPO LOGISTICS**. Eventually, when those two workers got inside of the apartment, they marched right in, by force, into my room. One of them impersonated the owner of the residence, even though he couldn't legally confirm it. After that, these two men started to threaten me to leave the place immediately. When the police arrived after being ultimately called in, not only would they not make an honest report of the incident, but also intimidated me with telling me that it would not be a problem for them to find hard drugs on me, if I didn't leave the residence.

Following this situation, I decided to use the help of a lawyer. I turned for help to a free of charge legal service bureau: Juridisch Loket. The workers there, didn't want to help me – they told me that the problem I had with my employer was one of those, you had to solve personally.

I then sent a letter to the embassy, in which I pointed out all those problems: I wrote about discrimination against Poles, about unpaid overtime, mobbing, the lack of work safety regulations, intimidating the workers, etc. and I never received an answer.

I also reported life and health endangerment incidents to certain authorities – I didn't even get one response. While I was still working, a number of accidents had happened – two spinal fractures, a broken pelvis, a broken leg and a lot more. There has even been a fatal accident (in the same company I worked for, but in a different warehouse). So the danger was real! Yet, no one – even after all that's happened – started to inspect the workplaces. Nonetheless, when I protested in only a seemingly dangerous way – that was not directed at the ordinary folk but at the better situated elites, the reaction was all of the sudden: instantaneous. In a matter of minutes, almost every possible security service arrived: the police, firemen – even a group of anti-terrorists.

Even though not one person got hurt, I have been locked in jail ever since – It's been 6 months now, and on the top of that, I face up to 12 years in prison. In addition to that – my employer, was never brought to justice.

Thank you All, for your solidarity.

- Radek