

Amazon hit by first strike in Germany

May 14 2013



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Employees at two logistics centres in Bad Hersfeld and Leipzig launched a strike with the start of the early shift at 6:00 am (0400 GMT), the giant services sector union Verdi said.

In Bad Hersfeld, strikers planned to march to a rally in the city centre at around 11:00 am (0900 GMT), while employees in Leipzig rallied in front of the warehouse.

"There's a good atmosphere. The whole thing is really great," said Verdi's chief negotiator Joerg Lauenroth-Mago.

Verdi is demanding that Amazon's 9,000 employees in Germany be paid according to a sector-wide wage deal for the retail and mail-order industries.

But the head of Amazon Germany, Ralf Kleber, rejected such demands in recent press interviews.

Bad Hersfeld is the largest of Amazon's seven distribution centres in Germany, with a workforce of more than 3,000. The Leipzig site employs around 2,000 people.



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Amazon says it pays an hourly wage of 9.30 euros (\$12) to employees in their first year and then 10 euros after that.

Verdi is calling for a minimum hourly wage of 10.66 euros for Leipzig.

Amazon's working conditions in Germany were the subject of a public television documentary earlier this year which accused the group of bringing workers in from crisis-hit countries such as Spain to work at Amazon warehouses.

The documentary alleged that employees were subjected to bullying from security personnel, some of whom wore clothing associated with neo-Nazi groups.

It also alleged that Amazon paid the workers less than advertised and that their belongings were regularly searched in the temporary housing they were provided.

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