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Siberian Coal Miners Launch Hunger Strike Over Unpaid Wages

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Miners in the Kemerovo region. **Maxim Kiselev / TASS**

A group of coal miners in Siberia's Kemerovo region said Monday that they were launching a hunger strike after their employer failed to pay them millions of rubles in wages.

At least 12 workers signed a petition announcing the hunger strike that is expected to last until they receive 46 million rubles ($478,000) in unpaid wages, according to a local Telegram news channel, citing a photo of the petition.

The regional branch of Russia's Investigative Committee, which probes major crimes, said it opened an investigation into the Inskaya mining company for having failed to pay nearly 400 workers between July and October. Local media reported that the striking miners pitched two tents outside the company's headquarters.

Later on Monday, the Kemerovo region's Coal Mining Ministry said Inskaya's owner, Denis Nemykin, agreed to pay off some of the wages by the first week of November. The company owes 1.2 billion rubles ($12.5 million) in salaries and taxes, local media reported, sharing a

video of Nemykin meeting with miners.

Nemykin promised to pay off some of the wages within a week if workers agreed to extract the remaining 300,000 metric tons of coal from the mine, but the miners said their equipment was in a “critical” state of disrepair.

“You’re pushing us down a dilapidated mine shaft to our deaths,” local media reported one of the striking miners as saying.

Regional prosecutors said their previous efforts had allowed miners to receive more than 100 million rubles ($1 million) in unpaid wages from the Inskaya coal mine, located some 3,500 kilometers (2,100 miles) east of Moscow.

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