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## 'We are not robots': Amazon warehouse employees push to unionize

As Amazon's workforce has more than doubled over the past three years, workers at Amazon fulfillment center warehouses in the United States have started organizing and pushing toward forming a union to fight back against the company's treatment of its workers.

Amazon's global workforce reached more than 613,000 employees worldwide according to its latest quarterly earnings report, not including the 100,000 temporary employees the company hired for the holiday season.

Just a few months after Amazon opened its first New York-based fulfillment center in Staten Island, workers announced on 12 December the launch of a union push with help from the Retail, Wholesale and Department Store Union.

"Amazon is a very big company. They need to have a union put in place," said an Amazon worker who requested to remain anonymous. The worker has been with the company for two years and was transferred to Staten Island when it opened in October 2018. "They overwork you and you're like a number to them. During peak season and Prime season, they give you 60 hours a week. In July, I had Prime week and worked 60 hours. The same day I worked overtime, I got into a bad car accident because I was falling asleep behind the wheel."

Other employees cited working conditions as one of the prevailing factors for wanting to form a union. "I support the effort. They have to be more supportive toward their employees," said another Amazon employee in Staten Island. "Right now, at that fulfillment center, if an employee is a picker, they want that person to pick up 400 items per hour, picking each item every seven seconds."

They noted that to keep up with that hourly rate, workers cannot take bathroom breaks or they risk Tot (time off task points) that could be used to justify job termination. [...]

"If you get injured, they don't treat you well, they don't care," said 24-year-old Hibaq Mohamed, who has worked at the Shakopee facility for over two years. She said every two to three months, Amazon increases hourly productivity rates workers must meet to keep their jobs. "During summertime, we don't get enough AC, in the winter we don't get enough heat. We want to change the imbalance at Amazon."

Hafsa Hassan, 21, who has worked at the fulfillment center since July 2017, claimed managers create a hostile work environment that prevents workers from seeking proper medical treatment, taking bathroom breaks, or reporting safety issues.

"A lot of workers aren't comfortable going to managers and that has a lot to do with rate. There's an obsession with rate," said Hassan. "The rate people have to make every single hour, every hour it's mentioned, and if a person isn't doing well, the managers will pick on them. Sometimes you can hear it from different departments."

Amazon said it "did not recognize" these allegations. "We work hard every day to ensure all of our employees are treated fairly and with dignity and respect," the company said. [...]