

Nominated for the Public Eye People's Award 2012

by Supporters for the Health and Right of People in the Semiconductor Industry,
stopsamsung.wordpress.com:

Samsung

Headquarters:	Seoul, South Korea
Industry:	electronics / conglomerate
Revenue / Profit:	USD 172.5 billion / USD 13.8 billion (2010)
Owned by:	publicly-listed corporation
Employees:	290,000
CEO:	multiple
Website:	www.samsung.com

Summary

High-tech gadgets built on the backs of workers: South Korea's richest conglomerate uses banned and highly-toxic substances in its factories, without informing and/or protecting its workers. As a result at least 140 workers were diagnosed with cancer, of which at least 50 young workers have died. Despite clear evidence, Samsung denies its responsibility and publicly discredits the sick and deceased, as well as their relatives. Samsung has a history of over 50 years of environmental pollution, trade union repression, corruption and tax flight. Samsung's power in South Korea is so great that many citizens speak of the "Samsung Republic."

Irresponsible Corporate Behavior

Samsung uses banned toxins in its factories, without informing its workers. Samsung claimed that it had banned PVC and BFR in its products since 2004 under pressure from unions and environmental groups, without verifiably having actually done so. Although toxic gas leaked 46 times within half a year in a factory, the workers were not informed. In a random sampling at six factories, regular use of the cancer-causing solvent benzene was found, although Samsung denies its use. During the tests Samsung did not disclose 10 of 83 chemicals in use, claiming the information was a trade secret. Samsung also disputes its responsibility for numerous illnesses and deaths resulting from cancer that occur conspicuously often among young workers. Instead the company publicly defames the victims, and also attempts to repress trade unions by aggressive means, including threats against individuals. Tax flight is also common at Samsung.

Consequences

At least 140 work-related cases of cancer – including at least 50 deaths – yet no acknowledgement of guilt or financial compensation. Most victims come from poor families and have never worked for another firm, so they are completely dependent on Samsung. Since the company does not acknowledge its role in the illnesses, the victims and their families often spend their entire savings on treatment. Samsung's aggressive "no union" policy obstructs transparency and therefore the rectification of the situation.

Current Status and Demands on the Company

Samsung must remove numerous toxic substances from its production centers; other electronics manufacturers are already doing so. In addition, Samsung must protect its workers from accidents involving toxic substances, inform the workers when accidents occur, and accept responsibility for resulting cancer cases. Samsung must also allow unions, and work together with them to make factory conditions more transparent and to improve employee protection.

Further Information

Website of Supporters for the Health and Right of People in the Semiconductor Industry:

stopsamsung.wordpress.com

Collection of articles:

english.hani.co.kr/arti/ENGISSUE/74/

Online petition:

www.petitiononline.com/s4m5ung/petition.html

Information from Samsung unions (in Korean):

samsunggroupunion.org