



PRESS RELEASE

October 13, 2017

Solidarity with Asbestos Victims!

Today (October 13, 2017), thousands of demonstrators are marching through the streets of Paris demanding compensation and support for comrades killed by asbestos and denouncing the failure to bring to justice corporate entities, entrepreneurs, government officials, scientists, public relations professionals and others who collaborated to ensure that the industrial sector that manufactured and sold asbestos-containing products continued to flourish in France throughout the 20th century.¹

Members of the UK community issuing this press release work with asbestos victims' groups, support patients suffering from asbestos cancer, represent at-risk workers and campaign for asbestos justice at home and abroad. Unable as we are to be in Paris today with our colleagues, we wish to send greetings of solidarity and express our admiration for their efforts to make manifest the silent and invisible asbestos epidemic which has caused so much ill-health and premature death in France.

Figures released last month (September 2017) highlighted the human cost of asbestos profits around the world; the populations of the UK and France are amongst those worst affected by toxic exposures with the UK incidence of asbestos-related mortality the highest in the world and France's the 8th highest.² It is not just the scale of the tragedy which links our two countries. In 1931 when Britain introduced the world's first asbestos regulations, Turner & Newall Ltd. relocated asbestos factories from England to north west France to avoid the cost of improving occupational protections. In France they did not have to do so for another 45 years.

Commenting on the significance of today's events, Graham Dring of the Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum (UK) said:

“For far too long, asbestos victims in both the UK and France were marginalized, ignored and abused. Today's march in Paris is a visible manifestation of the mobilization of a community whose members have fought for every breath, every benefit and every medical treatment. While governments colluded with industry, the injured and their families suffered. The ties which bind French and UK asbestos victims are enduring and solid; their battles are our battles. Today, we send them a message of fellowship and solidarity and our wishes for a great day!”

¹ Asbestos was banned in France in 1997; until that time, France had been one of Europe's leading consumers of asbestos.

² Odgerel CO, Takahashi K, et al. *Estimation of the global burden of mesothelioma deaths from incomplete national mortality data*. September 2, 2017.

<http://oem.bmj.com/content/early/2017/09/02/oemed-2017-104298.full>

Notes to Editors

1. For more information on this press release, please contact Graham Dring by email at: grahamdring@btinternet.com or Liz Darlison by email at: liz.darlison@uhl-tr.nhs.uk
2. Information about the groups which released this joint communique can be found at:

The Asbestos Victims Support Groups Forum UK³

<http://www.asbestosforum.org.uk/>

Mesothelioma UK

<http://www.mesothelioma.uk.com>

The International Ban Asbestos Secretariat

<http://ibasecretariat.org>

The GMB trade union

<https://www.gmb.org.uk>

Asbestos in Schools

<http://www.asbestosinschools.org.uk/>

<http://www.asbestosexposureschools.co.uk/>

³ As of October 13, 2017 this website was experiencing some technical problems.