

Amazon threatens to shut down all warehouses in France after court ruled it violated workers' safety



Paris, April 16 (RHC)-- Amazon said it may close down its warehouses in France instead of limiting its operations to the delivery of essential goods, after a court ruled that it has failed to protect its workers' safety.

"Our interpretation [of the ruling] suggests that we may be forced to suspend the activity of our distribution centers in France," the U.S.-based e-commerce giant said on Wednesday, promising to appeal the decision.

Amazon said that it was "puzzled" by the court ruling given "the hard evidence brought forward regarding security measures put in place to protect our employees."

On Tuesday, a court in Nanterre, outside Paris, ordered Amazon to limit operations at its six warehouses in France to only delivering essential products like food, personal hygiene items and medicine. The company may resume full operations after it submits a professional risk assessment and will be fined if it fails to comply, the court said.

The decision was made after the Union Syndicale Solidaires, representing Amazon warehouse workers, sued the company, demanding better employee protection amid the COVID-19 pandemic. The court found that Amazon “has clearly failed in its obligation to ensure the security and protection of the health of its employees.”

Disagreeing with the ruling, Amazon said that it has stepped up safety and disease-control measures, including the distribution of masks and hand sanitizers to workers at its French warehouses, while implementing social distancing measures and temperature checks.

The company has been facing similar complaints in the United States, where warehouse workers went on strikes demanding more protection and better pay for employees working in hazardous conditions. Amazon then took flak after firing several of its employees who had publicly raised concerns about workers’ safety.

Moreover, leaked internal communications revealed that Amazon General Counsel David Zapolski called one of the fired workers, Christian Smalls, “not smart or articulate,” as part of the suggested PR campaign to mitigate the fallout from the complaints against the company.

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