



## Documentary reveals deaths in sandblasting job

Friday, September 18, 2009

SEVİM SONGÜN

ISTANBUL – Hürriyet Daily News

A 35-minute documentary, shot by three directors, reveals the story of many workers who caught a fatal occupational disease in a very short time due to the lack of secure working conditions in Turkey.

The movie titled "Silicosis" displays the suffering of workers who caught silicosis, a disease caused by inhaling silica dust.

Tens of young workers have died from silicosis and 550 workers have been diagnosed with the fatal disease in Turkey in the last few years. All of these workers caught the disease at small workshops where denim jeans undergo jet sandblasting to give them a "worn-in" appearance. They were working without taking any health precautions.

The film, shown at Alkazar cinema in Istanbul's Taksim area for the first time on Thursday, focuses on the story of these workers and the efforts of the group the Committee for Solidarity with Jean Sanding Workers, which provided them with legal and medical assistance.

The three directors, Petra Holzer, Selçuk Erzurumlu and Ethem Özgüven, show close ups of workers' facial expressions while they learn about their disease from a doctor, or learn the rights that were never given to them by their employers.

The film shows professor Zeki Kılıçarslan, who is an expert on chest diseases and actively worked to help these workers, telling them that there is no cure for silicosis at the moment. He says the disease can either stay at the same level or it might get worse. The look in the workers' eyes gets darker after they hear that.

The workers complain that nobody warned them about this disease. "Our employer told us that there is no health risk with this job. We were working more than 12 hours a day in rooms filled with dust and sand so that we could not even see the jeans we were sanding," one of the workers in the film said.

"Although these workers have reported that they have an occupational disease, since most of them do not have social security they cannot retire," Tanzer Güven, a lawyer for the workers, said at the premiere of the documentary. He said they have filed complaints and the case is continuing.

The film will be shown at Nazim Hikmet Art Center and Foundation in Ankara on Oct. 16. A copy of the documentary is also on sale via the Web site: [www.kotiscileri.org](http://www.kotiscileri.org).