

# Workers walk out over treatment of women at game giant Activision

July 28 2021, by Gilles Clarenne, With Glenn Chapman In San Francisco



Employees of the video game company, Activision Blizzard, hold a walkout and protest rally to call for changes in conditions for women and other marginalized groups.

Workers at video games giant Activision Blizzard walked out to protest sexism and harassment on Wednesday as a call went out online to boycott hit titles such as "Call of Duty" and "Candy Crush."

The protest at Activision's campus in Irvine, California, came as the company launched what it promised would be a far-reaching review of its workplace practices.

About 200 people, some waving signs, gathered in the shade of trees flanking a driveway onto the campus. Passing cars honked in support.

Messages on signs included "Women's Voices Matter" and "Play Nice Play Fair."

Messages were also written out on pieces of paper hung from a cord strung between a tree and a tent set up by protesters.

Employees of the gaming giant called for the protest, and work stoppages by remote workers, after claims of a pervasively toxic workplace reverberated in the wake of a state lawsuit.

Twitter chatter about the protest included the account @JakeEddyCarp posting a list of Activision Blizzard games so people boycott them in support of outraged employees.

The protest sparked a social media flurry of support from people in the gaming sector and elsewhere responding to the latest revelations about toxic workplace conditions.

"Standing in solidarity with #ActiBlizzWalkout and all those who are working hard to make positive changes in the [gaming industry](#)," Twitter user Elvira wrote.

"It's heartbreaking to constantly hear about the abuse women face in this industry."



Activision Blizzard employees stage a protest in Irvine, California, calling for better treatment of women employees and an end to mandatory arbitration in harassment cases .



## 'Tone deaf'

Chief executive Bobby Kotick issued a statement to his staff prior to the walkout acknowledging that the company's initial response had been "quite frankly, tone deaf."

"Anyone found to have impeded the integrity of our processes for evaluating claims and imposing appropriate consequences will be terminated," he said.

The company behind "Call of Duty" and "World of Warcraft" is facing a [civil lawsuit](#) in California over claims that it violated state laws because it "fostered a sexist culture and paid women less than men."

"I will be standing with my friends and colleagues in order to make our voices heard and demand real change," an Activision designer posted on Twitter under the name Zorbrix using the hashtag #ActiBlizzWalkout.

"Together we are far stronger than alone."

A statement which organizers said was signed by some 2,600 employees called for an end to mandatory arbitration in harassment cases, improvements in recruiting practices and creation of a diversity and equity task force.



Employees of the video game company, Activision Blizzard, walked off the job in protest and those working remotely were asked to join virtually.

### **Reviewing sexist content**

Kotick said in his statement that the Santa Monica-based company "will continue to investigate each and every claim" of sexism at Activision "and will not hesitate to take decisive action."

Content from Activision's games criticized as sexist will also be removed following complaints from both staff and players, Kotick said, while

"listening sessions" will be organized to allow staff to "speak out and share areas for improvement."

The work stoppage of Activision employees at home and in offices was set to last throughout the work day Wednesday, with a live event during lunch hours at the Irvine campus.

Workers had blasted Activision Blizzard's initial response to a slew of sexism and harassment complaints in a letter calling its reaction "abhorrent."

According to the lawsuit from the California Department of Fair Employment and Housing, women make up only about 20 percent of Activision's staff and "very few women ever reach top roles at the company."

"The women who do reach top roles earn less salary, incentive pay and total compensation than their male peers," it added.



Activision Blizzard employees called for a protest over allegations of discrimination and harassment of female staff members.

The lawsuit also detailed widespread inappropriate behavior, describing male employees who groped women co-workers, "talk openly about female bodies, and joke about rape."

Activision Blizzard had initially pushed back on the allegations, saying that the lawsuit "includes distorted, and in many cases false, descriptions of Blizzard's past."

"In cases related to misconduct, action was taken to address the issue," it said.

The game company said the Californian state agency had "rushed to file an inaccurate complaint, as we will demonstrate in court."

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