



Geneva and Brussels, 23 September 2021

Mr. Roman Golovchenko
Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus

Transmitted via Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva by e-mail: belarus.geneva@mfa.gov.by

IndustriALL Global Union and the ITUC urge Belarusian Government to act immediately to stop intimidation and harassment, including judicial harassment, of trade union leaders and members

Dear Mr. Golovchenko,

[IndustriALL Global Union](#) and [International Trade Union Confederation \(ITUC\)](#), both representing millions of workers worldwide in different sectors of economy, including in Belarus, we are deeply concerned over the continuing growing pressure against independent unions in Belarus. We call on you to stop intimidation and harassment, including judicial harassment, of trade union leaders and members.

Please be reminded that this June, at the end of the 109th session of the International Labour Conference, where the case of Belarus was discussed and reviewed by the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards for the systematic violation of trade union rights and its failure to comply with ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association, the Committee issued a recommendation to Belarus to "refrain from the arrest, detention or engagement in violence, intimidation or harassment, including judicial harassment, of trade union leaders and members conducting lawful trade union activities."

However, we have been informed by the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BITU), an affiliate of IndustriALL and, through the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions of Belarus, the ITUC that the pressure on the union has increased dramatically within the last week, with a number of union leaders, activists and members detained, arrested and fined, and union activists' homes and union offices searched.

At Grodno Azot, vice-chairperson of the BITU local union Valiantsin Tseranevich and BITU members, Andrei Paheryla, Vladzimir Zhurauka, Grigory Ruban, Dmitry Ilyushenko and Aleksey Sidor, were detained within the last few days.

At Naftan in Navapolatsk, the apartment of Volha Brytsikava, local BITU chairperson, was searched and her computer was seized. She was detained, but has since been released. Two more BITU members, Andrey Berezovsky and Roman Shkodin, were arrested for seven and 15 days respectively. The local BITU office in Navapolatsk was also searched on 21 September.

In Zhlobin, local BITU secretary-treasurer at the Belarusian Metallurgical Plant (BMZ) Aliaksandr Hashnikau was arrested on 17 September.

BITU president Maksim Pazniakou was detained on 17 September, but later released and fined US\$350 for a social media post from last year, featuring a Belarusian music group, later labelled by authorities as extremist.

These are just a few of many recent examples of continued attacks on independent unions and fundamental rights.

Therefore, IndustriALL and the ITUC urges you, in your capacity as Prime Minister, to put to an end to the intimidation, harassment, detention and arrest of trade union leaders and members conducting lawful trade union activities, to stop pressure and attacks on the Belarusian independent trade unions, in line with recommendation of the ILO Committee on the Application of Standards and in order to comply with the ILO Convention 87 on freedom of association, ratified by Belarus.

We take note that Aliaksandr Babrou and Yauhen Hovar, who were sentenced to 2.5 years in prison for an attempted warning strike at BMZ on 17 August, were released. However, the third ex-worker of BMZ, Ihar Pavarau, who was convicted in the same case and sentenced to three years in prison, still remains in custody and has been kept in the solitary confinement for an unspecified period of time, which could severely harm his psychological and physical health.

Consequently, we demand the prompt release of all union leaders, activists and members, including Ihar Pavarau, who have been unlawfully detained on account of their union activities and struggle to protect fundamental rights.

We anticipate your urgent action and reply.

Sincerely,



Atle Høie
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Union



Sharan Barrow
General Secretary
ITUC