

001/18  
16 April, 2018

To the Ambassador of Belarus in Japan

## **Demand to stop persecuting independent trade unions in Belarus**

Your Excellency,

IndustriALL Japan Liaison Council expresses concern about a new wave of serious violations of fundamental labour rights in your country since last summer.

In August 2017, the offices of IndustriALL Global Union affiliates Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union (REPAM) and Belarusian Independent Trade Union of Miners (BITU), and private apartments of their leaders were searched by the police for allegedly misusing funds and tax evasion. During the search, union computers and other materials were confiscated, undermining unions' operations. Ihar Komlik, REPAM's chief accountant, spent three months in jail. The investigation has been recently extended to 1 May 2018.

In March 2018, four REPAM activists, including its deputy president Zinaida Mikhnyuk, were stopped and searched on their separate return travels from Lithuania, where union workshops were organized. Gennady Fedynich, president of the union, was subject to the same humiliating procedures several times last year.

IndustriALL Japan Liaison Council strongly believes the Belarusian government is acting in retaliation for REPAM's active role in organizing protests in the beginning of the last year against a notorious presidential decree heavily taxing the unemployed people. In this regard, IndustriALL's Executive Committee adopted a special resolution on Belarus at its meeting in Geneva in April 2017. Since then, and under the influence of mass protests, the decree has been abolished, but its new version, coming into force in 2019, is not much better, suggesting the unemployed should pay substantially more for public services.

Therefore, IndustriALL Japan Liaison Council urges You to contact Your Government to convey our demands, which are:

- Put an end to persecution of independent trade unions in Belarus;
- Fulfil international obligations undertaken by Belarus in particular to respect ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize;
- Stop mass interrogations of rank-and-file members of REPAM (over 400 by now), and discontinue criminal investigation against union leaders Gennady Fedynich and Ihar Komlik.

With best regards,



Akira Takakura  
President