

# **Draft resolution on Belarus submitted by the Secretariat at IndustriALL Global Union's Executive Committee meeting in Geneva on 27-28 April 2017**

## **End forced labour and the criminalization of dissent in Belarus**

Considering that:

- The Government of Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko on 2 April 2015 issued the Decree No. 3 "On prevention of social dependency" dubbed as the decree on "social parasites";
- The decree criminalizes unemployment by imposing a tax of US \$240 on Belarusian citizens who while living in Belarus are not able to prove that they were employed in the country for more than 189 days; US \$240 is a very large amount for most Belarusian workers, even more so for unemployed workers; 470 thousand Belarusian citizens out of 10 million living in Belarus have recently received tax bills per the decree on account of suffering unemployment;
- The decree is in blatant violation of Article 41 of the Constitution of Belarus and international core labour standards, including ILO Convention 105 on the Abolition of Forced Labour;
- Belarusian unions and human rights organizations have jointly developed plans of action to fight the decree; Belarusian workers, unions and civil society organizations organized a series of peaceful protests in 2017 against the decree; this includes a march of 3,000 people in the capital Minsk on 15 March along with thousands more in smaller protests across the country that week, followed by an even larger protest on 25 March;
- The Government of Belarus has brutally cracked down on these protests, violating the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly; 50 people including at least 12 trade unionists were arrested in retaliation for the 15 March protest, and more than 700 people including at least 10 journalists were arrested in connection with the 25 March protests;
- Many of the arrested protestors served short jailed terms and received heavy fines; Chair of IndustriALL affiliate the Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union (REPAM) and deputy member of the IndustriALL Executive Committee Gennady Fedynich was found guilty on 17 March in a Minsk court for participating in one of the protests and fined US \$640; in total so far 34 REPAM members, 3 from IndustriALL affiliate Free Trade Union of Metalworkers (SPM), and a few activists from other independent trade unions have been punished for participation in the protests, arrested for periods of 2 to 15 days and fined a total amount of US \$5,000.

Therefore, let it be resolved that:

- IndustriALL condemns in the strongest possible terms Belarusian Decree No. 3 and calls for it to be rescinded immediately;
- IndustriALL calls on the Government of Belarus to respect the rights to freedom of expression and peaceful assembly, respect all core labour standards and end the practice of forced labour;
- IndustriALL congratulates Belarusian affiliates and their members for courageously fighting

back against Decree No. 3;

- IndustriALL encourages affiliates to offer Belarusian affiliates any financial support necessary to pay the unjust fines imposed on union members for participating in protests against Decree No. 3;
- IndustriALL encourages affiliates to urge their governments to demand that the Government of Belarus immediately rescind Decree No. 3;
- IndustriALL Secretariat will work with ITUC to organize actions at select Belarusian embassies and if necessary will organize global days of action at Belarusian embassies.

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