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Calling on Soligorsk District Department of Internal Affairs to stop persecuting trade union leaders

Dear Mr Sharavar,

I am writing this letter to you as the General Secretary of [IndustriALL Global Union](http://www.industrial-union.org), which represents more than 50 million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors throughout the world, including Belarus, to call on Soligorsk District Department of Internal Affairs to respect the fundamental labour rights of workers and stop persecuting trade union leaders. Please, note that the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BITU) is affiliated to IndustriALL Global Union.

IndustriALL Global Union condemns in the strongest terms the persecution and detention of the trade union leaders Anatol Bokun, Siarhei Charkasau, Yury Korzun, and Pavel Puchenia, employees and union leaders at JSC Belaruskali. All of them have been detained arbitrarily several times in the last two months.

It is clear that these union leaders, who are also strike committee members, are being targeted for their trade union activity, which is protected by national and international labour law. Anatol Bokun, who had been in detention since 21 September and was slated for release on 16 October, he has once again been detained and taken to an undisclosed detention centre in Soligorsk. This is unacceptable. It constitutes a blatant violation of his fundamental human rights.

Similarly, Siarhei Charkasau, who is also the vice chair of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BITU), was detained along with Yury Korzun and Pavel Puchenia while having a picnic in a public park in Soligorsk on 3 October. They remained in detention for 15 days, but on 16 October, the day they were supposed to be set free, they were detained again and moved to a police detention centre in Soligorsk.

While in detention, Anatol Bokun, Siarhei Charkasau, Yury Korzun, and Pavel Puchenia were asked to lie: if they signed a document — in addition to recording a video for the state run Belarusian Television — to admit guilt and remorse for taking part in the strike actions, they would be granted freedom. The four union leaders refused to budge. In consequence, they have been unlawfully detained again for 15 more days for allegedly taking part in an unauthorized mass meeting.

We are extremely concerned about their safety as they have been not only arbitrarily detained, are being kept in very poor conditions—in Anatol Bokun's case, his detention conditions amount to sheer torture, as he is being exposed to non-stop loud recordings—and equally worrisome, they are being relocated each time they get a new sentence, and in some cases to unknown locations.

Therefore, it is imperative that Soligorsk District Department of Internal Affairs put an immediate end to the persecution and violation of the labour rights and human rights of the trade union leaders Anatol Bokun, Siarhei Charkasau, Yury Korzun, and Pavel Puchenia, and immediately release them in strict accordance with national and international laws and human rights standards.

We look forward to your prompt action and reply.

Sincerely,



Valter Sanches
General Secretary

CC.
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