



**Council of
Global Unions**
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Press-release

**Global unions meet with Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya,
former Belarusian presidential candidate**

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Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the former presidential candidate in the Belarus elections of 2020 and the main opposition figure, met with representatives of global labour unions in Geneva today, in person and via Zoom.

The meeting addressed the appalling situation in Belarus after the presidential elections of August 2020 and consequent repression of peaceful protests against the contested results.

The humanitarian crisis in Belarus has escalated and reached a formidable scale: since August, at least six people have been killed during protests and over 33,000 were detained. Many reported torture during detention. The United Nations notes at least 500 cases of torture, while the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, reported that investigative bodies received 4,644 complaints about the use of physical force by officers of the Interior Ministry dispersing post-election protests. However not a single officer has been convicted so far, while a total number of criminal cases against protesters amounted to 2,300 cases.

Workers in Belarus face continued violations of their fundamental rights. Independent unions, affiliated to global unions, and union leaders and activists have been subject to repression, in breach of international labour standards and norms, which have been ratified by Belarus.

Global unions express solidarity with people of Belarus and pledge to cooperate with independent representatives of Belarusian society, including the Office of Svetlana Tsikhanouskaia, on the establishment of trade union rights and freedoms in Belarus, including the fundamental right to freedom of association, and the right to organize union activities independently and without interference or pressure from governmental bodies or employers.

Global unions exchanged views and agreed to possible remedies to the situation in Belarus, including the role of independent unions in the campaign towards building a democratic Belarus.

Global unions have compiled a list of global companies doing business in Belarus. Global unions are working with the affiliates who have relationships with these companies in different countries, the companies are urged to initiate a process of due diligence regarding their links with businesses in or active in Belarus. In particular, these companies are requested to ensure that any businesses they deal with in Belarus:

- Do not threaten, persecute, harass, discipline, penalize or otherwise disadvantage any worker who is taking strike, industrial or other protest action aimed at ensuring democracy and the observance of human rights in Belarus according to the UN's provisions on the right for peaceful demonstration and freedom of speech and the ILO's provision on Freedom of Association; and



- Do not prevent workers from exercising their human right to freedom of association by joining an independent trade union in Belarus, or take any action against such unions.

Global unions also endorse an appeal to businesses active in Belarus, drawn up by human rights organizations and unions.

ENDS

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The Council of Global Unions (CGU) is the partnership between the International Trade Union Confederation, Global Union Federations and the Trade Union Advisory Committee to the OECD.

The CGU meets annually. The current Chair of the CGU is Steve Cotton (ITF) and the Secretary is Sharan Burrow (ITUC).