



Geneva and Brussels, 01 March 2021

Mr. Josep Borrell
High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
European Commission
Brussels, Belgium

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IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union call on the EU Commission to intervene to stop repression against independent trade union leaders and activists in Belarus

Dear High Representative,

We are writing this letter to you on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](#) and [industriAll European Trade Union](#), both representing millions of workers in mining, energy and manufacturing industries in Europe and worldwide, to express our deep concern over the growing repression against workers in Belarus, including independent trade union leaders and activists, who are exercising peacefully their fundamental freedoms and human rights, and call on the EU Commission to intervene to stop this unacceptable situation.

The Belarusian authorities are clearly trying to intimidate everyone in order to discourage people from struggling for democracy and human rights. IndustriALL Global and European Trade Unions continue to receive reports from affiliated independent trade unions in Belarus on detentions of their union activists and human rights defenders.

Recently, the repression against civil society has increased dramatically. Some workers who held peaceful protests, including Ihar Pavarau, Aliaksandr Babrou and Yauhen Hovar, were sentenced to up to three years in jail for a strike. They were accused of organizing, preparing or actively participating in actions that grossly violate public order, as on 17 August they had blocked the road in a protest against election fraud and police violence.

On 16 February, the police held raids on the offices and homes of trade union activists, human rights defenders and journalists across the country.

The office of IndustriALL affiliate, the Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union (REP), was raided by the police. All communication devices and laptops were seized, along with almost all basic documentation, including accounting documents. Officials refused to give a copy of the search record, or supply an inventory of the seized items.

The same morning, the police searched the home of the REP lawyer for the Brest region, Vladimir Maley, and confiscated his personal equipment, books and money and he was detained.

The apartment of the chairman of the REP primary trade union at the Minsk Motor Plant, Andrei Komlik-Yamatin, was also searched on 16 February, and he was detained for refusing to open the door. The next day the court sentenced him to 25 days of administrative arrest "for disobedience to an order or request of an official on duty".

According to the state security agency, the Investigative Committee of Belarus, the mass searches and interrogations are aimed at “establishing the circumstances of the financing of protest activities” and were carried out as part of criminal proceedings under Article 342 of the Criminal Code on the “organization and preparation of actions that grossly violate public order”.

The REP union leadership stated that the police planted a hunting shotgun cartridge in a couch in the office kitchen to justify further repression, which may result in allegations of terrorist activity with lifetime imprisonment or death penalty. Considering the ongoing human rights violations and systematic lack of justice, REP chair Vasily Zavadsky was forced to leave Belarus.

IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union denounce this outrageous attack on independent trade union leaders, activists and human rights defenders, which is clearly an attempt by the state to destroy the country’s civil society organizations that have been fighting for fundamental human and workers’ rights in harsh undemocratic conditions.

We consider these brutal raids carried out under false pretexts as an act of repression and an attempt to undermine the independent trade union movement, in breach of international labour standards and norms, ratified by Belarus, as well as the principles of the Eastern Partnership promoted by the European Union (EU).

The Belarusian independent unions urgently need a stronger involvement and intervention by the international community; otherwise, they may fall victim to the repressive regime. The entire independent union movement in Belarus is under threat.

The independent and democratic trade unions are playing critical role in promotion of democracy, constructing a democratic governance and society in all countries around the world, and Belarus is no exception. At this important and difficult time of Belarusian pro-democracy uprising followed by repression, independent union movement must be supported through high level political intervention from the European Union.

Therefore, IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union call on the European Commission to once again review the current political and economic relationship with Belarus and use all possible measures to stop the anti-democratic and violent acts of the Belarusian authorities, to put an end to attacks on independent trade union movement in Belarus, and to demand the immediate release of all independent trade union leaders, activists and workers, who are being held in illegal detention for the peaceful exercise of their rights, and withdrawal of all charges against them.

Please note that IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union are ready to provide you with further updated information and reports on the current situation in Belarus. In addition, if you deem it necessary, we are ready to meet with you and/or your team for deeper discussions.

We anticipate your swift intervention and response.

With best regards,



Valter Sanches
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Union



Luc Triangle
General Secretary
IndustriAll European Trade Union

CC: Mr Jörg Hofmann, President, IndustriALL Global Union and IG Metall
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