

Geneva, 11 December 2023

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President of the Kyrgyz Republic  
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### **IndustriALL Global Union calls on the President of the Kyrgyz Republic to release MMTUK chairman Eldar Tadjibaev and withdraw baseless charges**

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing this letter to you as the General Secretary of [IndustriALL Global Union](#), which represents more than fifty million workers in mining, energy and manufacturing sectors throughout the world, including Kyrgyzstan, to express our deep concern over the detention of Eldar Tadjibaev on 6 December and the charges brought against him. Eldar Tadjibaev is the chair of the Mining and Metallurgy Trade Union of Kyrgyzstan (MMTUK), an affiliate of IndustriALL Global Union.

We are shocked to learn that Eldar Tadjibaev, as deputy chair of the Federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan (FTUK) dealing with issues related to reforms in the trade union system of Kyrgyzstan--he has been holding this position on a voluntary basis--has been accused of corruption, creating a threat to the interests of society or the state and causing serious harm, and a criminal case has been initiated as per the part 2 of article 336 of the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic.

We consider the arrest of Eldar Tadjibaev and the authorities' decision to prosecute him as an attack on freedom of association, and an attempt to criminalize trade unions.

We have been working with Eldar Tadjibaev for many years and know him as one of the most active and progressive trade union leaders, always standing at the forefront of the protection of workers' rights, improvement of working conditions and establishing genuine social dialogue.

For over a decade, Eldar Tadjibaev and MMTUK have been following closely the new draft laws in Kyrgyzstan related to labour rights to make sure they comply with the ILO Conventions, ratified by Kyrgyzstan, in order to maintain the reputation of Kyrgyzstan as a country that respects international law.

We don't understand how a union leader, not being a state or municipal official, can be accused of corruption, which is a crime committed by officials against the interests of the state and municipal service, according to the Criminal Code of the Kyrgyz Republic.

Moreover, the accusation is based on the fact that, as a member of the FTUK Council, Eldar Tadjibaev participated in the voting on the sale of a land plot on 26 March 2018. We would like to note that according to the law on trade unions of the Kyrgyz Republic and in accordance with the ILO Convention 87 ratified by Kyrgyzstan, trade unions have the right to sell the property they own, therefore such accusations against trade union leaders, who are acting within the framework of union charters, are baseless.

We have been monitoring the situation with trade union rights in Kyrgyzstan for years. In 2020, the MMTUK filed a case (3386) with the ILO Committee on Freedom of Association, exposing the systematic violations of trade union rights in the country, particularly the violation on freedom of association and the harassment of trade union leaders.

We appreciate, Mr. President, that back in 2021 you have vetoed three times the law on trade unions that, if adopted, would have seriously undermined freedom of association in Kyrgyzstan and deprived unions of their independence.

However, this year we have noticed a new attempt to take control over trade unions. In June 2023, the Jogorku Kenesh adopted the resolution with a series of instructions, including amending the law on trade unions, pursuing digitalization and personnel reforms within trade unions, and reshaping trade union structures. The FTUK was tasked with proposing changes to charters and reviewing agreements on the lease of union property.

In October 2023, Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement agencies visited union offices to seize the last ten years' financial documents, effectively paralyzing the activities of trade unions. Over the last few days, several other trade union leaders have been arrested. We also received information that the law enforcement agencies are now using various means to replace all trade union leaders from their posts.

We consider this an illegal interference in the affairs of trade unions as the continued pressure from authorities in order to restrict the freedom of association, which is a gross violation of both national law and the ILO Conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan. In this respect, we also consider the arrested MMTUK chair Eldar Tadjibaev a political prisoner.

These actions negatively affect the image of Kyrgyzstan, which for many years was perceived in the world as an island of freedom and democracy in Central Asia.

Therefore, IndustriALL Global Union calls on you, Mr. President, as the guarantor of the Constitution, to use your power to immediately release Eldar Tadjibaev from his unlawful detention, to withdraw all charges against Eldar Tadjibaev, and to put an end to interference in the affairs of trade unions from any third party, in compliance with national law and ILO Conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan.

We also urge that any trial of trade union leaders is held publicly, providing access to court hearings to independent journalists, representatives of human rights organizations, foreign embassies and all interested parties.

I expect your prompt action and reply.

Yours sincerely,



Atle Høie, General Secretary