



Brussels and Geneva, 10 January 2024

To:

Ms Ursula von der Leyen

European Commission

ec-president-vdl@ec.europa.eu

Dear President von der Leyen,

Calling for urgent action on Kyrgyzstan

We are writing this letter to you on behalf of [IndustriALL Global Union](#) and [industriAll European Trade Union](#), both representing workers in mining, energy and manufacturing industries throughout the world, to express our deep concern with regard to the continuing violation of fundamental trade union rights in Kyrgyzstan and over the detention of Eldar Tadjibaev on 6 December 2023 and the charges brought against him.

At the time of his detention, Eldar Tadjibaev was the chair of the Mining and Metallurgy Trade Union of Kyrgyzstan (MMTUK), which is an affiliate of IndustriALL Global Union. After the arrest, Eldar Tadjibaev has been forced by law enforcement agencies to resign from his position as the MMTUK chair.

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

For over a decade, Eldar Tadjibaev and MMTUK has 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 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.

In 2023, new attempt were made to put pressure on trade unions to restrict freedom of association, in gross violation of the ILO conventions ratified by Kyrgyzstan. In October, Kyrgyzstan's law enforcement agencies visited union offices to seize their last ten years' financial documents.

On 6 December 2023, the State Committee for National Security detained two deputy chairs of the Federation of Trade Unions of Kyrgyzstan (FTUK), as well as several chairs of sectoral unions, including MMTUK chair Eldar Tadjibaev. On 28 December, a criminal court extended the detention of Eldar Tadjibaev and other union leaders until 28 February 2024.

Under the banner of fighting corruption, law enforcement agencies in Kyrgyzstan are interfering in unions' internal affairs to seize union property and replace all leaders of sectoral trade unions with people loyal to the authorities.

After these arrests, according to the information from Kyrgyz unions, the law enforcement agencies have used intimidation and threat of further arrests to force all chairs of unions to leave their posts. As a result

of the unprecedented pressure, all chairs of sectoral unions and all FTUK vice-presidents resigned from their posts.

On 29 December, a meeting of the FTUK Council was held and all members voted, presumably under the pressure from the state, to transfer FTUK-owned health centres for the temporary free use of the Presidential Administration, in accordance with the Presidential Decree dated 22 November 2023.

Moreover, a decision was made to hold an extraordinary FTUK Congress on 15 February 2024. We presume that in the current circumstances, given the enormous pressure on trade unions in Kyrgyzstan, the extraordinary FTUK Congress will not be able to conduct a democratic and fair election of trade union leadership, without direct interference from the state.

As a result of this attack on freedom of association, the trade union movement in Kyrgyzstan has been paralyzed, as — now former — union leaders fear to oppose this blatant violation of trade union rights, under the threat that they or their family members will be prosecuted by the state bodies.

In this regard, we consider the arrest of Eldar Tadjibaev, one of the most active and progressive trade union leaders, who has always been at the forefront of struggle against violations of labour rights, a way by the state to deprive Kyrgyz workers of their legitimate voice through their unions and intimidate all union leaders.

Therefore, IndustriALL Global Union and industriAll European Trade Union urge the EU to demand that the Kyrgyz authorities put an end to the interference in trade union affairs and release immediately Eldar Tadjibaev, including dropping all charges against him.

We look forward to your prompt action and reply.

Yours sincerely,



Isabelle Barthès and Judith Kirton-Darling
Acting Joint General Secretaries
IndustriAll European Trade Union



Atle Høie
General Secretary
IndustriALL Global Trade Union