

Resolution on Belarus

IndustriALL Global Union condemns the dissolution of the independent trade unions and demands the release of all trade unionists in Belarus

The Third Congress of IndustriALL Global Union, which took place on 14-15 September 2021, unanimously adopted a resolution entitled “stop the destroying of the civil society and protect the rights of independent trade unions in Belarus” over the rigged elections, massive repression, violence and torture by Belarusian authorities against peaceful protestors, civil society and particularly independent trade unions.

Harsh persecution of the democratic labour movement continues. Trade union offices and homes of union leaders and activists have been searched on numerous occasions, their mobile phones and laptops have been seized. Union leaders, militants and members have been interrogated and detained.

As an example, an attempt of a warning strike at Belarusian Metallurgical Plant resulted in two and a half to three years in prison for three union activists Ihar Povarau, Aliaksandr Babrou and Yauhen Hovar. Hundreds of union members were fined for civil activism. Many lost their jobs, as their contracts were not extended.

As of today, there are over 1350 political prisoners in Belarus according to human rights organizations. This number is growing. Among them, there are over three dozen leaders and members of independent and democratic unions, including affiliates of IndustriALL.

In April 2022, a massive attack on the independent union movement caused the arrest of more than twenty leaders and activists of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), who were detained for exercising their legitimate right to freedom of association. Their arrest constitutes a grave violation of their fundamental human rights.

The majority of the arrested unionists remain in custody until today. Some have been already sentenced to lengthy prison terms, and other trials are about to start. Detentions of unionists continue.

On 18 July, the Supreme Court decided to liquidate and dissolve the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), and its four members, three of them affiliated to IndustriALL - the Belarusian Independent Trade Union (BITU or BNP), the Union of Radio and Electronics Workers (REP), the Free Trade Union of Belarus (SPB), and the Free Trade Union of Metalworkers (SPM).

The repression of independent trade unions in Belarus is politically motivated and constitutes an assault on democracy and its institutions.

Having met on 15-16 November 2022 in Geneva, Switzerland, the IndustriALL Executive Committee:

- Condemns the Supreme Court decision to liquidate the independent trade unions and does not recognize this court decision;
- Denounces the continued persecution of independent union leaders, activists and members;
- Demands that the trade union leaders and activists remaining in prison be released immediately and all charges against them be dropped;
- Announces that BITU-BNP, REP and SPM continue to be member of IndustriALL;
- Expresses solidarity with the independent Belarusian labour movement;
- Commits IndustriALL to continue to assist and fully support the independent trade unions in Belarus to guarantee their organizational continuity and integrity;
- Calls on IndustriALL affiliates to continue to provide active solidarity support to the democratic Belarusian labour movement, and the independent unions.