



3 May 2022

Embassy of Belarus in Australia
Attention: Ambassador of Belarus
31 Guilfoyle Street
YARRALUMLA ACT 2600

Emailed: australia@mfa.gov.by , au.consul@mfa.gov.by

Re: Calling to stop repression of independent trade unions in Belarus

Dear Ambassador,

I write to you as the General President of the Mining and Energy Union of Australia, an affiliate of IndustriALL Global Union. We are deeply concerned over the recent blatant attack on the independent trade union movement in Belarus.

On 7 April 2022, the Committee for State Security of Belarus took a decision to list the Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union (REP) as an extremist organisation and ban its activities.

The Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union (REP) was founded in 1990, and since then it has been fighting for workers' rights in Belarus. The union has local structures across all regions of Belarus, including Minsk, and it has been recognised as an independent union by the international labour movement.

Belarus is taking a wrong path by oppressing its democratic workers' organisations and thus violating its international obligations, including the ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise, ratified by Belarus.

Over the last month, we have learned that union leaders, activists and ordinary members of Belarusian independent trade unions, Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union REP, Belarusian Independent Trade Union BITU and Free trade Union of Metalworkers SPM, remain subject to continued pressure and reprisals from the authorities and employers for their activities in defence of workers' rights.

More than two hundred REP members have been subjected to various administrative penalties, and many have been sentenced to imprisonment. Recently, there has been an increase in interrogations of union activists, the illegal installation of video and listening devices in the union offices, and pressure on union members to leave the union has become widespread.

This happened, for instance, at the Minsk Tractor Plant and BELLIS enterprises, in Gomel, Mogilev, Orsha and Bobruisk regions.

Another attack on the independent trade union REP occurred in Brest. The police broke into the house of Zinaida Mikhniuk, head of the Brest regional organization of the trade union, a veteran of the trade union movement and former chairperson of the union REP and conducted searches in her house and the Brest office of the trade union. Zinaida Mikhniuk was also detained.

The main Justice Department of the Brest Regional Executive Committee reported that the Brest regional branch of the REP was excluded from the register of the structures of trade unions registered in the region.

These violations should stop immediately.

Therefore, we call on the Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus and the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus to act urgently in order to stop the repression of independent trade unions, their leaders, and members.

Furthermore, the Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union must be removed from the list of extremist organisations and be allowed to continue carrying out its trade union activity.

We anticipate your prompt reply and action to ensure all trade unionists are released.

Yours sincerely,



Tony Maher
General President
Mining and Energy Union

Cc:

Mr Igor Sergeyenko

Head of the *Administration of the President of the Republic of Belarus*

Transmitted via Permanent Mission of the Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva

Email - Belarus.geneva@mfa.gov.by

Mr Roman Golovchenko

Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus

Email – contact@government.by & press@government.by