

**Mr. Guy Ryder**  
**International Labour Organisation Director-General**

02 May 2022

Dear Mr. Ryder,

Please, find below the Statement of the Coordination Council of the Belarusian democratic forces in connected to the recent rise of repressions against independent trade unions in Belarus.

**Statement of the Coordination Council**  
**On the persecution of Belarusian independent trade unions.**

On April 19, 2022, independent trade union movement in Belarus was attacked. Searches took place in the office of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BCDTU) and its partner organizations - the Belarusian Free Trade Union (BFTU), Free Trade Union of Metallurgists (FTUM), Belarusian Trade Union of Radioelectronic Industry Workers (REP) in Minsk and Minsk region. Both leaders and activists are affected. As a result of the searches, the authorities confiscated personal computers, flash cards, personal documents, passports, bank cards, belonging to members of trade union activists and members of their families, as well as SIM cards, flags, digital devices and trade union documents. Many independent trade unions leaders and activists were arrested detained. The exact number of the arrested trade union activists is still unknown.

The Chairman of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic trade unions (BCDTU) **Aliaksandr Yarashuk**, Deputy Chairman of the BCDTU **Siarhei Antusevich**, Chairman of the Free Trade Union of Metalworkers (FTUM) **Aliaksandr Bukhvostau**, Chairman of the Belarusian Free Trade Union **Mikalai Sharakh**, Deputy Chairman of FTUM **Aliaksandr Yeudakimchyk**, leader Belarusian Trade Union of Radioelectronic Industry Workers (REP) **Gennadz Fiadynich** are in the Pre-trial detention centre of the Belarusian State Security Service (KGB). Many trade union activists, such as Vital Chychmarou and Aliaksandr Bukhvostau were detained. The offices of the FTUM and BCDTU were searched. The BFTU office is sealed.

The exact legal basis for the criminal charges to trade unionists is also unknown. The search warrant reportedly listed about 10 articles of the Criminal Code, which have traditionally been used over the past two years to harass civil society and political opposition. Persecution of independent trade unions and trade union leaders has recently become systemic. Thus, on April 7, 2022, state authorities announced an extrajudicial decision of the KGB to recognize Belarusian Trade Union of Radioelectronic Industry Workers (REP) "extremist group". For the first time the regime included an officially registered association based on individual membership in such a list of "extremist groups". It is known about repeated arrests of representatives of independent trade unions, activists of regional trade union cells in February-April 2022.

These actions of the Belarusian authorities go against the country's international obligations and national legislation of the Republic of Belarus. The Preamble of the Charter of the International labour organization (ILO) speaks about the need for recognition the principle of freedom of associations. ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights in World of Work 1998 calls for

freedom of association among four fundamental rights, to be used by the member states of the International Labour Organization, by virtue of the mere fact of membership in the ILO. The right to form trade unions, protection from discrimination in connection with the exercise of the right to freedom of association is guaranteed Convention on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize (No. 87) and the Convention on the Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining (No. 98), 1956. Freedom of association, including the right to form trade unions, is guaranteed by Articles 36 and 41 of the Constitution of the Republic of Belarus.

We demand the immediate release of all detained trade union leaders and activists, as well as all political prisoners. We demand immediate end to discrimination against independent trade unions, repression, intimidation campaign of civic and trade union activists, their administrative and criminal prosecution, and total destruction of freedom of association.

We fully support the assessment of the current situation set out in the joint statement (1) of Belarusian human rights organizations (Lawtrend, Belarusian Helsinki Committee; Human Rights Center "Viasna") and call on the international democratic community to publicly express strong protest against gross violations of human rights in Belarus and give an assessment to the actions of the Belarusian authorities, use all possible means to influence the situation.

In the event that the erepressions against independent trade union activists and leaders are not stopped, arrested union members will not be released, we urge the International labour organization to suspend the membership of the Belarusian pro-government trade unions, because they do not in any way protect the rights of the workers of Belarus.

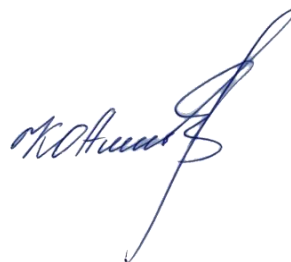
**Siarhei Dyleuski**

Member of the Presidium of the  
Coordination Council



**Volha Kavalkova**

Member of the Presidium of the  
Coordination Council



**Pavel Latushka**

Member of the Presidium of the  
Coordination Council



(1) <https://spring96.org/en/news/107490>