

Mr. Igor Sergeyenko
Head of the Administration of the President
of the Republik of Belarus

Transmitted via Permanent Mission of the
Republic of Belarus to the United Nations Office
and other international organizations in Geneva
by e-mail: belarus.geneva@mfa.gov.by

Mr. Roman Golovchenko
Prime Minister of the Republic of Belarus
contact@government.by; press@government.by

Our ref.:
RH

Your ref.:
NN

Date:
20. april 2022

Calling to stop repression of independent trade unions in Belarus

Dear Mr Igor Sergeyenko,

Dear Mr Roman Golovchenko,

I write to you on behalf of Tekna – The Norwegian Society of Graduate Technical and Scientific Professionals.

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 organization 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 recognized as an independent union by the international labour movement.

Belarus is taking a wrong path by oppressing its democratic workers' organizations 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 months, 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 of 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, veteran of the trade union movement and former chairperson of the union REP, and conducted searches in her house and in 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, it is imperative that the Belarusian Radio and Electronic Industry Workers' Union be removed from the list of extremist organizations and be allowed to continue carrying out its trade union activity.

We anticipate your prompt reply and action.

Yours sincerely,



Lars Olav Grøvik, President of Tekna

Tekna - The Norwegian Society of Graduate Technical and Scientific Professionals.