



PERC PAN-EUROPEAN TRADE UNION COUNCIL CRE CONSEIL REGIONAL EUROPEEN
ВЕРС ВСЕЕВРОПЕЙСКИЙ РЕГИОНАЛЬНЫЙ СОВЕТ

PERC Executive Committee's statement on Belarus

The suppression of democracy in Belarus reached new heights. Thousands of citizens arrested, hundreds sentenced for long prison terms, many exiled. Civil society organisations face forceful dissolution after being included in the list of so-called “destructive” organisations by the government. Independent unions of the ITUC-PERC affiliate BKDP are also in that list. The Belarusian Association of Journalists was dissolved.

An unprecedented attack was launched on BKDP and independent unionists. Despite clear condemnation of the repression of the freedom of association and the right to strike at the International Labour Conference, the government intentionally mischaracterizes the ILO, bombards it with petitions and appeals regarding economic sanctions some governments applied to Belarus, but dismisses ILO judgments and recommendations, those of the Commission of Inquiry in 2004 and the most recent CAS¹ and CFA² conclusions. It also fails to cooperate with the UN HRC³.

In spite of a clear call by the ILC to “refrain from the arrest, detention or engagement in violence, intimidation or harassment, including judicial harassment, of trade union leaders and members conducting lawful trade union activities”, the government launched a new attack on independent trade unions. Leaders of BKDP affiliates BNP Maxim Poznyakov and SPB Nikolay Sharakh and dozens of activists were arrested, detained, prosecuted, hundreds dismissed, searches in trade union offices implemented. Defamation and slander is utilised by state officials, official media and in social media⁴. Changes to national legislation were introduced to legalise repressive measures already implemented by employers and state officials against workers exercising their right to take industrial action.

¹ https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_814514.pdf

² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---relconf/documents/meetingdocument/wcms_776025.pdf

³ <https://undocs.org/A/HRC/47/49>

⁴ <https://www.ituc-csi.org/belarus-repression-intensifies>
<https://www.ituc-csi.org/ituc-condemns-wave-of-attacks-belarus>

All trade unions of the PERC are united in condemnation of the suppression of the freedom of association in Belarus. We stand in solidarity with the BKDP and independent unions and demand the government:

- Stop any repressive campaigns and actions against trade unionists, and release all activists, sentenced or arrested for implementing their fundamental rights;
- Implement in full the recommendations of the ILO Commission of Inquiry and Committee on the Application of Standards and engage in dialog with BDKP and independent unions;
- Dismantle the obligatory registration of trade unions by local authorities that dissuades and eventually puts workers who want to create a union of their own choice at the will of management or governors, register new unions emerging without delay instead of penalizing founding members;
- Abolish the short-term contract system that promotes forced labour, builds a climate of fear and suppresses the dignity of workers and decency of work, denying freedom of association, expression and assembly;
- Respect the right of workers to withdraw their labour when their rights – including in relation to healthy and safe working conditions or their democratic freedoms – are violated.

We call on all governments to further pressure the regime to respect international labour standards, in particular the right to freedom of association and the right to strike, and to take all practical steps within the ILO and UN institutions.

We urge businesses with activities in Belarus to demonstrate their strong commitment to human rights, workers' rights and democratic rights and to engage constructively with independent trade unions to improve the lives of working people and citizens in Belarus.

In solidarity with workers and independent unions of Belarus!