

The members of the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) and its affiliated organization protest against anti-labor draft laws, wage arrears, and demand to protect employment and workers' rights during COVID-19 response.

Trade unions started to protest on the Maidan and then continued their rally near the Government of Ukraine, the Parliament of Ukraine and the Office of the President of Ukraine.

In times of the COVID-19 pandemic, Ukrainian trade unions have to protest because of a lack of meaningful social dialogue. The KVPU call on the Parliament doesn't adopt anti-worker and anti-trade-union draft laws, including the draft law No. 2681 "On amendments to some legislative acts of Ukraine (regarding some issues of trade union activities)" and draft law "On Labour".

Recently, the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine sent for the information of the Joint Representative Body of Representative All-Ukrainian Trade Unions at the National Level the draft law "On Labour" claiming it had been revised "taking into account the proposals of stakeholders". In fact, this draft law, like the previous withdrawn one, has not been discussed by experts or publicly. Its provisions narrow the workers' rights and contradict the ILO conventions and the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

"The KVPU demands to stop the further promotion of the bill "On Labor" as one that contradicts the Constitution of Ukraine, international labour standards, EU directives and provokes aggravation of labor conflicts and social instability in time of the COVID-19 pandemic" – said the Chairperson of the KVPU Mykhailo Volynets.

On 27 May the draft law No.2681 was considered by the Committee of the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine on Social Policy and Protection of Veterans Rights – a step towards its passage into law. The KVPU is opposite this bill because it violates the Conventions No.87 and No. 98 of the ILO. In particular, it limits the exercise of the right to freedom of association by arbitrarily reducing the number of workplace unions; setting a minimum membership threshold which undermines the right of workers to form or join unions of their choice, especially workers in small- and medium-sized enterprises: creating a new trade union supervisory body with wide and unchecked powers to control the activities of trade unions; removing the employer's obligation to provide collective bargaining information to trade unions, etc.

Besides the requirements to stop attacks on labor and trade unions' rights, the KVPU demands to pay off wage arrears and protect workplaces during COVID-19 response. In particular, the members of the Independent Trade Union of Miners of Ukraine (NPGU) decided to start the open-ended protest action in Kyiv. According to the NPGU Chairperson Mykhailo Volynets, the first demand of miners is paying off all wage arrears.

"There are wage arrears for 2016-17, as well as for 2020. Yesterday, it amounted to UAH 622 million, but as of today morning, UAH 340 million were allocated from the state budget for wage payments. However, if nothing changes, tomorrow the wage arrears will increase up to UAH 800 million, as UAH 530 million is needed for paying wages for June. One of the reasons for this problem is that coal extracted by Ukrainian mines didn't purchase, meanwhile coal was imported from other countries. In addition, the state-owned company "Centerenergo" owed UAH 2 billion to Ukrainian coal suppliers. The miners no longer believe the promises, so they came to Kyiv to protest to protect their rights and the energy security of the state" –said Mykhailo Volynets.