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дэмакратычных прафсаюзаў»
АП БКДП



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«23» апреля 2020 г. №18

Guy Ryder
General Director
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Copy: Olga Kulaeva
Director of Moscow ILO Office

Minsk, 23.04.2020

SUBJECT: URGENT INTERVENTION OF THE ILO SOUGHT IN BELARUS
CONCERNING ORDINANCE OF THE COUNCIL OF MINISTERS OF THE
REPUBLIC OF BELARUS № 233, APRIL 16TH, 2020

Dear Director General,

On April 16, 2020, the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus adopted the Ordinance No. 233 “On holding the countrywide “subbotnik” (Saturday work) in 2020”. According to the Ordinance, on Saturday, April 25, 2020, all enterprises, organizations and institutions in Belarus are invited “on free and voluntary basis” to work uncompensated at their workplaces or places for executing other socially useful works defined by authorities.

The funds collected on this subbotnik will be transferred to the bank accounts of local authorities.

Subbotniks have been practiced for many years and have been repeatedly criticized by representatives of independent trade unions and human rights defenders in the country and abroad.

The so-called “voluntary nature” of subbotnik in conditions of short-term employment contracts, unprecedented restrictions of the rights of Belarusian workers, as well as complaints of workers themselves about assignments and orders for implementation of subbotnik works in Belarusian realities is seen as an event of forced labor violating fundamental ILO Conventions. In the past, the ILO supervisor bodies

have noted the use of refusal to participate in subbotniks as a pretext to dismiss trade unionists in Belarus.

Members of free and independent unions of Belarus facing oppression in this country where the principles of freedom of association are not respected, express their protest against the intention of the government, which, neglecting health and lives of its citizens and for satisfying its own ambitions, is going to force thousands of its citizens to go out for subbotnik works during the pandemic.

Only in one district of Bobruisk town in Mogilev region the authorities prepared a nine-page order (for the upcoming April 25 countrywide subbotnik), in which each town enterprise was assigned a land or territory for improvement, as well as the number of people to be engaged. For some enterprises, the numbers are simply gigantic:

Belshina (Tire company) - 1,500 employees;

Leather factory - 400,

Bobruiskagromash engineering - 820;

TAiM – 350;

Plant of tractor parts and components – 760;

Department of education of Pervomaiskiy district administration - 350.

In total, they plan to engage 8068 Bobruisk residents in the district for implementing the subbotnik works, but this is without considering the workers of the water supply and power networks, so the figure is likely to reach 8500. And this applies only to the Pervomaiski district of the town (there are two districts in town). But how many people will be moved to the streets is unknown. Authorities are now preparing such biological bombs throughout the country. Our members are among those called to participate in the subbotnik. They fear that if they refuse, they will face retaliatory actions like they did in the past. While our members are called to participate, neither their respective unions nor the BKDP, were consulted in this regard.

We ask the ILO to urgently intervene in this situation and urge the Government of Belarus to cancel the Ordinance of the Council of Ministers No. 233 of 04.16.2020 and to take all comprehensive measures to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic.

**Yours Sincerely,
Aliaksandr Yarashuk
President of BKDP**

