



# ELDH European Association of Lawyers for Democracy & World Human Rights

EJDM Europäische Vereinigung von Juristinnen & Juristen für Demokratie und Menschenrechte in der Welt  
EJDH Asociación Europea de los Juristas por la Democracia y los Derechos Humanos en el Mundo  
EJDH Association Européenne des Juristes pour la Démocratie & les Droits de l'Homme  
EGDU Associazione Europea delle Giuriste e dei Giuristi per la Democrazia e i diritti dell'Uomo nel Mondo

WITH LAWYERS  
IN 21 COUNTRIES

Equality Privacy Social Rights  
No Racism Peace No Torture No War  
Self-Determination of Peoples Civil Rights Democracy  
Human Rights Rights of Migrants

Moscow/London/Düsseldorf, 11 September 2020

## European Lawyers demand: Workers rights must be respected in Belarus

The situation in Belarus at the moment is extraordinary and worries the legal community around the world. People go out into the streets every day, every Sunday they accompany large-scale and unprecedented rallies, demonstrations and processions. Illegal actions of the authorities, extreme violence by the police and the authorities, for which the Government of the Republic of Belarus and personally President Lukashenko are responsible, have caused a number of strikes at the largest enterprises in the country.

According to the leader of the independent trade unions of Belarus (Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions) Alexander Yaroshuk: «This is just the tip of the iceberg, and no doubt it directly concerns both labor collectives and workers. They no longer accept this power in any form and will do everything in their power. You can talk about the uprising of the people against the regime, the usurpation of power in order for it to cease to exist».

Lukashenko, who usurped the government after the last elections, continues to use violent methods against citizens, threatens to lock-out labor collectives, and illegally arrests leaders of independent trade unions. The leaders of the strike committee of the Minsk Tractor Plant (MTZ) Sergei Dylevsky and the Minsk Wheel Tractor Plant (MZKT) Alexander Lavrinovich were convicted. Anatoly Bokun, head of the strike committee of OJSC Belaruskali, was first fined a large sum, and then sentenced to 15 days of arrest. Svetlana Volchek, coordinator of the strike committee of the Belarusian State University, was sentenced to 15 days of arrest.

Enormous pressure is being exerted on the members of the strike committees. Nine criminal cases were initiated against members of the strike committee of Belaruskali OJSC alone. The Soligorsk court also fined a large sum for participation in an unauthorized event, the former chairman of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union Nikolai Zimin. Two days later, he was arrested and again placed in a temporary detention center according to a previous court sentence to serve 25 days of administrative arrest. On August 30, the internal affairs bodies in Grodno detained and then released pending trial for participating in an unauthorized mass event, International Secretary of the Belarusian Independent Trade Union Yelizaveta Merlyak.

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In a letter to EU High Representative Josep Borrell and national ministers, the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) calls on them to support workers by:

- Speaking out for the fundamental right to strike of Belarusian workers as enshrined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

ELDH demands:

- We demand an immediate end to the persecution and reprisals against the leaders and members of the strike committees created at enterprises, organizations and institutions of the country.
- We are outraged by the announcement of a national lockout for the striking enterprises, announced by Alexander Lukashenko on August 22, 2020.
- We demand from the current Belarusian authorities at all levels, from the administrations of enterprises and their security services, to stop any pressure on the strikers and their families.
- We demand an end to illegal dismissals and the release of all those detained in connection with industrial collective actions.
- We support the demands on the need for a democratic reform of the country's labor sphere, the abolition of the system of fixed-term contracts, and the complete restoration of labor, civil and social rights of workers of the Republic of Belarus.