

Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles  
High Representative of the Union for  
Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

[Letter sent by e-mail]

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Dear High Representative,

The European Council last week rightly declared that the recent elections in Belarus were neither free nor fair, that it does not recognise the results and that the people of Belarus have a right to determine their future without violence and unlawful arrests.

While these words are welcome trade unionists and workers are risking their lives and their livelihoods by demonstrating for democracy and by taking strike action.

Nikolay Zimin, former president of the mining and chemical workers' union BNP, and Maksim Sereda, chairman of the Independent Trade Union of Miners (UMTO), were released from detention last week but others are being detained.

The Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), an independent trade union and a member of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), has now called for a national strike.

The government and employers are challenging the right to strike of Belarusian workers: they are threatening to arrest or dismiss striking workers, and we are aware of threats to suspend bonuses.

I call on you to speak out for the fundamental right to strike of Belarusian workers as enshrined in ILO Conventions 87 and 98.

Build support for BKDP's demand to re-run the election with an independent election commission and international observers.

Keep up the pressure on Lukashenko to stop the violence, persecution and arrests, and release all imprisoned union leaders, activists, and civil society representatives.

I urge you to discuss these matters at the Informal EU Foreign Minister meetings on 27-28 August in Berlin and to seek support of the Foreign Ministers for further action in pursuit of democracy and fundamental rights in Belarus.

The ITUC, ETUC and many national trade unions are working together to do all in our power to support independent trade unions in Belarus in their struggle for democracy and respect for their fundamental rights, and to make their voices heard by the international community.

I hope we can count on you to do the same.

Yours sincerely,



Luca Visentini,  
General Secretary ETUC