

May 1, 2024

VIA EMAIL

Government of the Republic of Belarus  
Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko  
House of Government,  
Independence Square, Minsk  
[contact@government.by](mailto:contact@government.by)

Prime Minister Golovchenko,

**Re: Ending the political persecution and repression of trade union leaders and activists  
in Belarus**

On behalf of Unifor, Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 315,000 members across the country, we join the international labour movement in condemning the ongoing targeting of independent trade unions and union leaders by your government.

Since the Belarus elections in 2020, your government has initiated a widespread crackdown on trade union activists, with independent unions being dissolved and many leaders being arbitrarily arrested, detained and falsely charged and sentenced on politically motivated grounds. This includes members of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP), the Belarusian Free Trade Union of Metalworkers (SPM) and the Belarusian Radio and Electronics Workers' Union (REP). The right to freedom of association is foundational to any democracy, and an independent trade union movement is key to ensuring that workers' voices are heard, and their rights respected.

We are gravely concerned as to how this violence and political repression has also targeted other groups, including journalists, lawyers and other human rights and democracy activists. These violations have been reported by international bodies and advocacy groups, such as Human Rights Watch and the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, who continue to highlight the negative situation on the ground, resulting in many nations, most recently the government of Canada, to impose further sanctions on Belarus officials. We are, therefore, urging your government to adhere to international law and human rights conventions and call for an immediate

release all union political prisoners, ending the political persecution of workers and to restore workers' rights to freedom of association.

We will continue to show our solidarity with trade union leaders and workers around the world in the spirit of freedom, democracy and human rights.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lana Payne". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lana" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Payne".

Lana Payne  
National President, Unifor

CC: The Honourable Mélanie Joly, P.C., M.P., Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada  
Atle Høie, General Secretary, IndustriALL

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