

Belarus-case

109th ILC – Committee on Application of Standards Belarus C87

Monday 7 June (1 to 4 pm) 2021

Contribution Tjalling Postma, Workers, Netherlands

2 minutes

Thank you chair!

This contribution is also on behalf of workers from Germany, Spain, France and *the Nordic countries*.

We want to express our deep concern over the continuous attack of the Civil Liberties and trade union rights in Belarus. We have noted that workers who have used their legal rights of union organisation and union action at their workplaces have been met with repression and intimidation by the authorities.

These are obvious violations of the freedom of association, a fundamental international human and trade union norm, enshrined in the ILO Convention 87, ratified by Belarus.

The repressive short-term contract system and trade union registration procedure meaning in practice sanctioning of trade union existence by the state authorities, are installed to prevent workers from exercising their rights for freedom and solidarity. Only the loyal can act collectively, those disagreeing are labelled as traitors and enemies. For the 20 years that this Committee has to deal with this case, only 1 independent union was registered.

Last year many workers joined collective actions in protest to police violence and repressions. Many turned to independent unions, but the authorities responded with new repressions against workers who decided to leave the pro-government Federation of Trade Unions, the FPB. Furthermore, the Belarus president publicly urged that trade unions be set up at all private enterprises as part of the FPB under the threat of liquidation.

Since January workers have been reporting being forced to sign a letter to the ILO allegedly by the FPB. Workers including their family members were thereby threatened with disciplinary actions, dismissals, cutbacks in pay.

The questioning of the comments and recommendations of the committee of experts by the Belarus government is for us unacceptable. The ILO Tripartite Committee on Freedom of Association has clearly condemned the repressions against trade union and civil freedoms. We consider the government's reply as a total rejection of the ILO supervisory bodies.

In its resolution in 1970, the ILC already explicitly pointed out that the absence and disrespect for civil liberties "removes all meaning from the concept of trade union rights".

