



Education International
Internationale de l'Éducation
Internacional de la Educación
Bildungsinternationale

Statement on Belarus

Starting from August 2020 citizens of Belarus have been exercising their right for freedom of expression and peaceful public protest fraudulent elections. Students are in the core of civil mobilisation. Workers, students, teachers participating in broader pro-democracy demonstrations have faced arrest, violent repression, and deprivation of rights. The state administration and security forces are coerced into putting pressure on protesters, strikers, and their families. More than 25,000 citizens were sanctioned for taking part in protests, hundreds serve different terms in prison, several thousand had to flee the country.

Earlier in September, the ILO Director-General urged the government of Belarus “to do all in [its] power to prevent the occurrence of human rights violations and ensure full respect for workers’ rights and freedoms”.¹ The letter also noted that the recommendations of the 2004 ILO Commission of Inquiry, many of which concerned serious interference with trade unions, including the compulsory registration of trade unions and their membership as leverage to intimidate workers, have still not been fully implemented.

We regret that the management of several universities succumbed to the pressure of authorities and have joined these repressive actions, threatening, and implementing in practice sanctions against protesters. University staff and students have faced pressure from their university administrations for establishing trade union organisations and trying to join the Free Trade Union of Belarus (SPB), member of ITUC-affiliated Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions (BKDP). At least 180 students were expelled, professors and academics faced dismissals. We believe education has a unique mission in promoting and defending these rights and freedoms, and democracy in general.

We call on the government of Belarus and on education authorities to respect the fundamental rights and freedoms of students and university staff, including freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly and freedom of association, as well as academic freedom and professional autonomy of teachers and academics. We urge the authorities to refrain from any form of violence or threat against peaceful protesters and to listen to the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus.

EI and ITUC stand in solidarity with workers, students, teachers and academics and all citizens of Belarus. Their courage and determination to restore democracy and to regain their legitimate rights and freedoms are a source of a strong inspiration for the whole world. EI and ITUC hear their voice and stand with them.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "David Edwards".

David Edwards,
General Secretary,
Education International

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sharan Burrow".

Sharan Burrow,
General Secretary,
International Trade Union Confederation

¹ https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_754965/lang--en/index.htm