

>>> "ITUC Press" <press@ituc-csi.org> 11.12.2007 9:06 >>>
INTERNATIONAL TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION (ITUC)

ITUC Online

216/111207

Belarus: Condemnation of a police raid

Brussels, 11 December 2007 (ITUC Online): The ITUC today expressed its strong condemnation of a police raid last week, on 6 December in the evening, against the office of its Belarusian affiliate, the Congress of Democratic Trade Unions. Police officers detained several young activists present in the office for printing information about a meeting of entrepreneurs and sealed or confiscated BKDP equipment and documents. The detainees were later released but were called up to appear in court for alleged "hooliganism".

The BKDP considers the matter as a clear provocation orchestrated by the Belarusian authorities to attack the independent trade union movement. The BKDP is the largest independent trade union organization in the country. It has for many years been fighting for trade union rights and freedoms, its members are regularly being harassed and discriminated and its leaders have repeatedly been arrested for their commitment to and defense of fundamental rights of workers and democracy,

The ITUC condemns the raid and calls on the authorities to respect and protect the work of the BKDP and of all its structures, including its central office, to remove the charges against its members and to repair damage made to its office and equipment. "It is outrageous that in a country which is under the close supervision of the ILO and which has been denied EU GSP preferences precisely for trade union rights violations just half a year ago, the police raids the trade union offices, removes its documentation and equipment and brutally interferes with union activities", - said ITUC General Secretary Guy Ryder. 'The methods the authorities are using to undermine the independent union movement leave no place for hope that the regime is serious about respecting its ILO obligations and repeated commitments to its own people and to the international community."

The ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates. Website: <http://www.ituc-csi.org>

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