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ITUC Condemns Belarus Government Attacks on Unemployed

Brussels, 20 March 2017, (ITUC OnLine): The ITUC has condemned the actions of the authorities Belarus for levying fines against unemployed people and detaining people who have protested against the government's actions. Some 450,000 unemployed people face fines of 200 Euros simply for not having a job, under a Decree on "Prevention of Social Dependency" made by the government of Alexander Lukashenko, who has held the Presidency of the country since 1994 and has consistently repressed independent trade unions as well as political opponents. The decree also forces unemployed people to do "community work" and spend 15 days in prison.

Sharan Burrow, ITUC General Secretary, said "it is disgraceful that the Lukashenko regime, incapable of creating decent jobs for the people of Belarus, is now imposing fines on some of the poorest and most vulnerable people in the country. The government's actions amount to pushing people into forced labour. We condemn both this bizarre policy, and the repression launched against those who have spoken out against it. The people who have been detained must be released immediately."

Dozens of people, including many trade unionists, have been detained by the authorities due to their involvement in protests against the fines. Several protesters have been subjected to gang violence, with those responsible for the violence escaping with impunity.

The ITUC represents 181 million workers in 163 countries and territories and has 340 national affiliates.

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