

SOLIDARITY STATEMENT

ITUC-Africa Demands Immediate and Unconditional Release of Trade Unionists and Political Prisoners in Belarus

The African Regional Organisation of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC-Africa, www.ituc-africa.org) strongly condemns the continued imprisonment of trade union leaders and activists in Belarus, who are targeted for exercising their fundamental rights to organise, express themselves, and act in defence of workers.

Across Belarus, trade unionists have been arbitrarily detained—many since **September 2021**—and handed harsh sentences under politically motivated charges. Among those unjustly imprisoned are:

- **Hanna Ablab** – detained **20 September 2021**; sentenced to **11 years**
- **Ruslan Badamshyn** – sentenced to **3 years restricted freedom**, later re-arrested and sentenced in 2025 to **2.5 years imprisonment**
- **Artur Khlus** – detained **October 2022**; sentenced **June 2023** to **5 years**
- **Siarhei Dziuba** – detained **20 September 2021**; sentenced to **12 years**
- **Ihar Mints** – detained **22 September 2021**; sentenced to **12 years**
- **Aliaksandr Hashnikau** – detained **18 September 2021**; sentenced to **14 years**
- **Siarhei Shametska** – detained **September 2021**; sentenced to **12 years**
- **Siarhei Shelest** – detained **September 2021**; sentenced to **14 years**
- **Volha Brytsikava** – initially sentenced in **April 2024** to **3 years**, with additional charges in **August 2024**, resulting in a **final 6-year sentence**
- **Andrei Khanevich** – tried **November 2022**; sentenced to **5 years**
- **Hanna Karneenko** – sentenced to **5 years**
- **Aliaksandr Kapshul** – detained **25 September 2021**; sentenced to **15 years**
- **Aliaksandr Murauyou** – detained **25 May 2021**; sentenced **September 2022** to **12 years**
- **Valiantsin Tseranevich** – detained **20 September 2021**; sentenced to **12 years**
- **Andrei Paheryla** – detained **17 September 2021**; sentenced to **14 years**

These cases expose a deliberate and systematic assault on independent trade unionism in Belarus. Workers are being criminalised for organising, participating in strikes, and defending dignity and justice in the workplace.

ITUC-Africa calls on the Government of Belarus to immediately and unconditionally release all political prisoners, including all detained trade unionists, and to annul all convictions arising from the exercise of fundamental freedoms. No worker should be imprisoned for standing up for their rights.

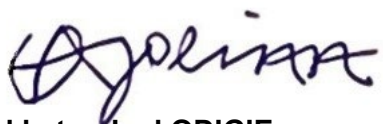
We further call on the government to take urgent steps to reopen and safeguard civic and democratic space, including:

- Full respect for freedom of association and collective bargaining
- An end to harassment, intimidation, and prosecution of trade unionists
- Restoration of independent trade union structures and activities

ITUC-Africa salutes the efforts of its affiliates, partners, and the global trade union movement that have provided dedicated support to the progressive Belarusian trade union movement. Further, we call on them not to tire but to continue intensifying solidarity and advocacy efforts, including public mobilisation, diplomatic engagement, and coordinated campaigns, to secure the release of these workers and restore trade union freedoms in Belarus.

The struggle of Belarusian trade unionists is a struggle for dignity, justice, and democracy—values that unite workers across continents. African workers stand firmly in solidarity.

Issued in Lomé, Togo, on 27 March 2026 by Akhator Joel Odigie, General Secretary, ITUC-Africa.



Akhator Joel ODIGIE
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