

**João Antonio Felicio**

President  
Président  
Präsident  
Presidente

**Sharan Burrow**

General Secretary  
Secrétaire générale  
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**Mr Nursultan Nazarbayev**  
**President**  
**Republic of Kazakhstan**

**cc: Prime Minister Sayintayev**

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**PERC/AL/pw**

**Brussels, 23 January 2017**

Dear President,

I write you on behalf of the ITUC, the world's largest trade union confederation representing 181 million workers from 340 national affiliates in 163 countries and territories, to protest against recent arrests of trade union leaders in Western Kazakhstan.

We wrote to you previously in relation to the lawsuit submitted by the Ministry of Justice to withdraw the registration of the ITUC-affiliated Confederation of Independent Trade Union of Kazakhstan (CNTUK/KNPRK). The lawsuit is based on the provisions of the law on trade unions, which was considered by the competent bodies of the International Labour Organisation as being in clear violation of Kazakhstan's international commitments and obligations under ILO Convention 87 on Freedom of Association. Despite the fact that the Constitution of Kazakhstan recognises the prevalence of the international law over domestic legislation, the court decided to accept the lawsuit and to withdraw the CNTUK's registration. The registrations of two KNPRK affiliates, the Domestic and Social Workers Union and the Healthcare and Social Development union" have also been withdrawn by court decision.

By eliminating legal opportunities for people to join union organisations of their own choice to promote their interests as workers, the government risks creating the conditions for radicalisation and destabilisation. Dozens of workers of the Oil Construction Company LLP in Western Kazakhstan went on hunger strike on 5 January in protest at the withdrawal of registration, and several hundred workers have subsequently supported this action. The authorities retaliated by arresting Nurbek Kushakbaev, Deputy President of the KNPRK, simply for calling for a strike, as well as Amin Yeleusinov, Chairperson of the local trade union. Previously, a criminal lawsuit was initiated against KNPRK President Larisa Kharkova.

These steps clearly show the intention of the Kazakh authorities to destroy the KNPRK and its affiliates not only by deregistering them, but also by putting pressure on and intimidating their leaders and members.

This scandal will tarnish the reputation of Kazakhstan as a trustful partner that respects its commitments – that other national and international partners do respect – and will certainly have implications for international cooperation and projects. We are informing relevant international institutions, including the ILO, OECD and EU of the situation.

We urge you to intervene as the guarantor of the Constitutional rights of the workers of Kazakhstan to ensure the immediate release of the arrested trade unionists and to put an end to the repression of the KNPRK and its leaders.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B.', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary