

# **Independent Trade Unions' Statement on the situation in the Eastern Ukraine**

Tuesday 13 May 2014, by [KVPU](#) (Date first published: 8 May 2014).

The Independent Trade Union of Coal Miners of Ukraine (NPFU) and the Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine (KVPU) are concerned over the situation and developments in the Eastern part of Ukraine that are becoming more and more menacing. In the conditions of terroristic manifestations and separatist atmosphere, the working people and citizens are becoming the hostages of the groups of extremists. Civil society activists, trade unionists, journalists, international observers and ordinary people are captured, robbed and tortured.

The activities of trade union organizations have become considerably hampered because of intimidation and physical violence of trade union activists. Thus, on 4 May, activists of the NPGU Olexander Vovk and Olexander Gurov together with other four persons were kidnapped by pro-Russian terrorists in Novogradievka-town of Donetsk oblast. They were kept in the oblast administration building where the terrorists humiliated, robbed and tortured them. Such acts of violence were due to the fact that the trade unionists in Donbas area supported openly the integrity of Ukraine. Now these activists are in hospitals in Kiev, however the question is whether they can go back to their families and work?

Unfortunately, the violation of miners' rights has become a routine in Donbas: the extremists block the miners on their way to work, intimidate them and kidnap. Recently, the unknown paramilitary people seized the general director of "Artemvugillia" hostage in the town of Artemivsk. All the workers of this enterprise were forced to abandon their work-places. Such a situation is extremely hazardous as the miners perform their duties in very difficult geological conditions: high levels of gas content, thin and steep coal layers in a very deep stratum, etc. Putting mines on operational hold can lead to irrevocable consequences making them non-functional any more.

The trade union activists had to form groups of self-defense in the region in order to protect peace in their towns and villages. However they cannot resist armed terrorists, who cause chaos and panic in Donbas, seize administrative buildings and enterprises, block the operation of banks, rob, kidnap, torture and kill people. Such actions destabilize political, social and economic situation both in the region and in the entire country, leading to decrease of living standards of population, withdrawal of investments and increase of unemployment. Ukraine's living standard, on top of everything, is the lowest in Europe.

The KVPU stands on integrity of the state, development of democratic society, adherence to human rights and current legislation, elimination of corruption, integration of Ukraine into the EU, non-fomenting of national strife, non-intrusion of Russian into Ukraine sovereignty and prevention of civil war.

The KVPU calls upon all civil and trade union organizations and political forces to unite efforts in order to preserve the territorial integrity of Ukraine, rule of law, respect to fundamental freedoms and peace in the country.

The KVPU requests herewith every possible assistance, support and solidarity from the International community.

**Mikhailo Volynets,**

Head of the KVPU

08.05.2014

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