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Appeal from Ukrainian labour and social activists

To foreign politicians - justice for Ukrainian workers!

Tuesday 14 May 2024, by [Collective / Multiple signers](#) (Date first published: 14 May 2024).

This appeal to workers and activists abroad comes from Ukrainian trade union activists and leaders in Kryvii Rih, as well as supports of various civil society initiatives. It is not an official appeal from any trade union. But it expresses very well the mood and wishes of many Ukrainian trade unionists and NGOs, and the issues they wish to communicate to their counterparts in other countries, less than one month before the elections to the European Parliament.

On the eve of the European Parliament elections, trade union activists in Kryvyi Rih appeal to candidates and remind politicians that it is wage earners who bear the brunt of the war against the aggressor. They are the ones who lack ammunition, and it is their interests that should be discussed in high places. As Ukrainian trade unionists, we believe that ignoring these facts is fraught with catastrophic consequences. We warn against using support for Ukraine to cover up selfish agendas, which is common among certain international elites.

Yuriy Samoïlov, leader of the Independent Trade Union of Miners, said: "In our families, every other conversation is about the war, about those who are currently serving, about how to help them, because the vast majority of those mobilised are ordinary workers. This has become the union's priority. But at the same time, labour legislation is being suspended, social spending is being cut, and children of businessmen and officials are having fun abroad. Is this fair?" - Yuriy asks.

The appeal has already garnered support from a diverse group of trade union, civic, and student activists from various regions of Ukraine. They share a common dissatisfaction with the lack of interest in employee issues and firmly believe that their collective voice is the key to change. They see the potential audience of the appeal as friends of Ukraine and allies of workers, in Europe and around the world.

Oleksandr Skyba, leader of the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers at the Darnytsia depot, points out that since the war's onset, labour rights have been significantly curtailed. He argues that most of these changes have not bolstered defence capabilities, but rather weakened them. "Allowing employers to arbitrarily suspend labour relations and the provisions of collective bargaining agreements is a severe blow to the role of trade unions and the foundations of democracy," he asserts. Oleksandr underscores his confidence in the power of unity and mutual support in the struggle and looks to his foreign comrades for solidarity.

Appeal to political representatives of the people of Europe and the world

Given that our fate often depends on your decisions, we, Ukrainian trade unionists and activists, would like to address you directly and emphasize the following:

While the international community is stuck in indecision, Russian occupation troops are gladly stepping up their offensive. Our comrades are dying on the frontline, forced to fight without enough arms supplies, and in the absence of proper air defence, our power plants, factories, and homes are being hit by devastating strikes. With truly “unwavering support,” this would not have been inevitable. However, for now, we have to face the aggressor mainly on our own.

The resilience of Ukrainian society depends on ordinary workers, who make up the majority of the armed forces and ensure the functioning of the home front in logistics, production, and maintenance of critical infrastructure. At the same time, there is an increasingly visible social divide, where public goods exist just for the elite and the rest are left with only duties. This demoralises and threatens the country’s defence capability and its future. While we continue to get paid peanuts, work overtime, and live under the constant threat of being put on the street, our government is much more concerned with deregulation and creating favourable conditions for business owners.

The safety and well-being of our families and friends are absolute values for us; they make us hold on. Yet it is painfully clear that post-war Ukraine will lack opportunities for a decent life if wage-earners do not get the leverage to solve their problems. It is with horror that we realise that we will probably have to seek a better life abroad, working day and night, competing for starvation wages from greedy masters.

It is also no secret that your elites are freezing wages, raising prices, cancelling holidays, and cutting social spending, justifying all these as a necessity to support Ukraine while at the same time continuing mutually beneficial trade with Russia; your money and technology is supporting their military capacities. This policy is extremely dangerous for the solidarity and trust between our peoples.

We understand that only together can we defend democracy and social justice from the invasions of imperialists, the pressure of dictators, the appetites of oligarchs, and the demagoguery of the far right.

Therefore, we call on you to:

1. Stop weapon exports to third countries and prioritise the supply of arms and ammunition necessary right now for defence to Ukraine. Our war should not become a pretext for profiteering by security salesmen!
2. Make it impossible for Putin’s regime to circumvent sanctions. This requires, among other things, closing shady schemes used by Russian, Ukrainian, and other oligarchs. Every transaction and spare part provided allows Russia to continue the war!
3. Write off the unfair debt and ensure your money is not spent on anti-social experiments in our country! International support should help to restore and expand universal healthcare and education, rebuild affordable housing and public infrastructure, and ensure decent jobs and working conditions.
4. Establish contacts with Ukrainian trade unions and civil society organisations, lobby for their involvement in decision-making at all levels, and insist on the importance of collective bargaining and freedom of associations! In a deformed political system, this is almost the only way for ordinary people to claim their rights.
5. Expose the use of solidarity to cover vested interests! Confiscate Russian assets, shut down offshore companies, and tax the super-rich/ Do not present your people with the false choice of sacrificing the fate of Ukrainians or taking away from the most vulnerable at home!

P.S.

Click here to sign the appeal and see the updated list of signatures:

<https://forms.gle/Yoju5b4HF2A891GT9>

Source:

<https://rev.org.ua/zakordonnim-politikam-pro-spravedlivist-dlya-ukra%D1%97nskix-pracivnikiv/>

Adopted at a meeting of trade union and student activists in Kryvbas on the occasion of International Labour Day chaired by Yuriy Samoilo and attended by representatives of independent trade unions ArcelorMittal Kryvyi Rih, Kryvyi Rih Iron Ore Plant, Metinvest and Rudomine, the Kryvyi Rih Free Trade Union of Healthcare Workers, the Kryvyi Rih Free Trade Union of Educators and Scientists, the Direct Action student trade union, the Witches of Kryvbas NGO, the Spravedlyvist NGO and the Social Movement NGO.

At 14 May 2022 12:00 the appeal was also supported individually by:

1. Oleksandr Skyba, leader of the Free Trade Union of Railway Workers at the Darnytsia depot
2. Natalia Zemlianska, Ukrainian Trade Union of Labourers, Entrepreneurs, and Migrant Workers
3. Oksana Slobodiana, "Be Like Nina," chair of the Lviv regional trade union
4. Vasyl Andreyev, chair for PROFBUD, Building Workers' Union of Ukraine
5. Liliia Vasylieva, deputy head of the Lviv Oblast Crane Workers' Union
6. Katya Gritseva, activist of independent student union Priama Diia (Direct Action) and NGO Sotsialniy rukh (Social Movement), artist
7. Vitalii Dudin, co-founder of NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), PhD in labour law
8. Artem Tidva, Organising officer, EPSU
9. Oksana Dutchak, co-editor of Spilne/Commons Journal
10. Lidiya Luchyshyn, treasurer of the Lviv Oblast Crane Workers' Union
11. Taras Bilous, editor
12. Andrij Pacan, turner
13. Pavlo Bryzhatyi, member of Independent student trade union Priama Diia (Direct Action) and NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), student of the National University of Ostroh Academy
14. Dariia Selishcheva, psychologist
15. Volodymyr Skimira, craneworker
16. Maksym Shumakov, Priama Diia student union activist
17. Iryna Strumeliak, labourer
18. Denys Pilash, activist of NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)
19. Dmytro Lypetskyi, craneworker
20. Valerii Petrov, activist of NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement), Ph.D, game developer
21. Ihor Duleba, craneworker
22. Romanenko Maksym, physician, activist of NGO Sotsialnyi Rukh (Social Movement)
23. Ihor Vasylets, member of the student union Priama Diia (Direct Action)
24. Zakhar Popovych, activist, Ph.D
25. Mykhailo Zvir, craneworker
26. Oleksandr Kyselov, migrant worker, board member of Skånes Industrisyndikat
27. Mariia Sokolova, activist of Independent student trade union Priama Diia (Direct Action)
28. Artem Remizovskyi, PhD-student in Cultural Studies, Kyiv-Mohyla Academy
29. Ruslana Mazurenok, chair of the union club of healthcare workers at Derazhnyans'ka hospital, activist of "Be Like Nina"

Click above to add your name to the call.