



AFL-CIO

AMERICA'S UNIONS

**American Federation
of Labor and
Congress of Industrial
Organizations**

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January 26, 2017

Mr. Nursultan Nazarbayev
President
Republic of Kazakhstan

Dear President Nazarbayev:

On behalf of the twelve and a half million members of the AFL-CIO, I write to express our deep concern regarding your government's actions to deregister the Confederation of Independent Trade Unions of Kazakhstan (KNPRK) and arrests of its leaders.

KNPRK Deputy President Nurbek Kushakbaev and local union Chairman Amin Yeleusinov were arrested and taken into custody on January 21 and are held at an undisclosed location. Your government also announced earlier that it will pursue criminal charges against KNPRK President Larisa Kharkova. These actions appear to be in direct retaliation for their peaceful efforts to challenge your government's illegal dissolution of their national trade union confederation as well as the industry-level unions within that confederation.

The KNPRK was legally registered in February 2016. In violation of ILO Conventions 87 and 98, which Kazakhstan ratified, the Ministry of Justice of the Republic of Kazakhstan filed claims seeking dissolution of the KNPRK and its constituent national trade unions, which the courts honored earlier this month. The dissolution of independent trade unions violates the internationally recognized right of workers to form, join, and participate in trade unions of their own choosing that are free from government control. By dissolving independent trade unions, your government is attempting to eliminate all legitimate workplace representation for KNPRK members. We also note that the ILO has on repeated occasions called upon the government to amend its laws regarding registration of trade unions, as they are contrary to ILO Convention 87 concerning the Right to Freedom of Association.

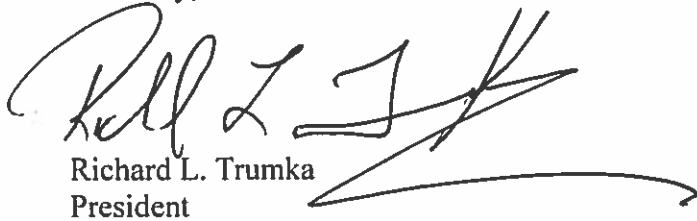
Several hundred members of the KNPRK and its affiliated unions called a strike on January 5, 2017, and many were on hunger strike, to protest the government's dissolution of their unions.

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Kazakhstan is a “beneficiary developing country” under the U.S. General System of Preferences (GSP). In 2014, Kazakhstan’s U.S. GSP benefits were the 11th largest in the world, with \$220 million in GSP-eligible imports to the United States. Under 19 U.S. Code 2462(c)(7), GSP benefits may be withdrawn where a country fails to take steps “to afford to workers in that country (including any designated zone in that country) internationally recognized worker rights.” GSP benefits have been withdrawn from countries as the result of petitions by the AFL-CIO documenting that ILO Conventions 87 and 98 have not been respected.

The AFL-CIO joins with the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and calls on the Government of Kazakhstan to cease and desist from its actions to deregister the KNPRK and its affiliated union bodies, and to harass union leaders through arbitrary arrest and detention. We further call on your government to release and drop all legal charges against KNPRK leaders. Absent these steps, the AFL-CIO will consider filing a petition to withhold future GSP benefits from Kazakhstan’s exports to the United States, among other measures.

Sincerely,



Richard L. Trumka
President

RLT/CF/kb
OPEIU#2

cc: Mr. Kairat Umarov, Republic of Kazakhstan Ambassador to the United States
Ms. Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, ITUC
Mr. Irakli Petriashvili, President, ITUC Pan-European Regional Council