

## THE SOLIDARITY CENTER PODCAST

Defending Democracy: Workers on the Front Lines

Host: Shawna Bader-Blau, Solidarity Center Executive Director

Guests: Maximilian Garcez, president, Brazilian Association of Union Lawyers

Sergey Antusevich, vice president, Belorussian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions

Maximiliano Garcez:

This is not anything new in the world, but there is a famous speech by Salvador Allende in the UN, in which he denounces the growing power of corporations eroding democracy, which only got worse.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Hello brothers and sisters, and welcome to the Solidarity Center Podcast and interview show that highlights and celebrates the individuals working for labor rights, the freedom to form unions and democracy across the globe. I'm your host, Shawna Bader-Blau. I'm also the executive director of the Solidarity Center in Washington D.C. We're the largest US-based international worker rights organization. We empower workers to raise their voice for dignity on the job, for justice in their communities, for greater equality in the global economy and for one just future.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Today people are thinking a lot about democracy and how it's under attack around the world. In recent weeks, we've seen the subversion of democratic processes and outright coups, from Myanmar to the United States. And the erosion of civil liberties and human rights, a trend in recent years, has been intensified by the pandemic.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Violations of worker rights are a big part of these moves to cut off civil liberties. More and more governments and employers are restricting the rights of workers, making it difficult, sometimes even impossible for them to join unions to make their voices heard. They're even jailing union leaders and members who exercise their rights.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So what's standing between us and rampant authoritarianism? Often as we will hear today, it's workers, their unions and labor rights activists. For more than a hundred years, workers and their unions have been a driving force for democratic change around the world. They have advanced a vision of democracy centered on political freedoms, economic rights and social justice.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

My guests today are both key figures in the labor movements of their respective countries. And today we'll hear about the unique and powerful ways they organize for social change. Later in this episode, we'll hear from a brave labor leader in Belarus, Sergey Antusevich, and his experience organizing against the backdrop of Cold War era's Soviet style autocracy.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

But first, my conversation with Maximiliano Garcez in Brazil. Garcez is the president of the Brazilian Association of Union Lawyers. He represented families of the 272 people who died in a preventable mining disaster in 2019. The Brumadinho mining dam was only held back by walls of sand that eventually collapsed into the mine and surrounding community.

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Shawna Bader-Blau:

It's among nearly 100 mining dams in the country built the same way. Garcez calls this tragedy industrial homicide, one committed by a major multinational company, Vale. And they are certainly no exception. Corporations around the world literally will get away with murder. In fact, 2.3 million women and men around the world die from work-related accidents and diseases every year, many of which are preventable.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

That's more than 6,000 workers dying on the job every single day. People have to risk their lives because they don't have a say. And that's because private corporations often put profit above people. Brazil's populist, right-wing government is now privatizing publicly owned companies, making them even less accountable.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Garcez will describe how the Vale disaster is a direct result of the government's privatization efforts. And he will share how the Brazilian labor movement is working toward a democracy that includes economic rights, social equality and justice in the political system. A democracy in which corporations are held accountable for their actions. We begin our conversation talking about how his work as a labor lawyer has evolved.

Maximiliano Garcez:

My main work the last 10 years or so has been a combination of a classic labor employment lawyer, mainly with class-actions. But since the coup in Brazil 2016, we created new sectors of our law firm to try to fight regressive policies, especially trying to prevent public owned companies from being privatized.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

And you have played a real role in some major legal battles with private-sector companies and privatization in Brazil. And I'm thinking about 2015 and 2019 dam destruction and environmental and loss of life. And I wonder if you could tell us a little bit about that work.

Maximiliano Garcez:

Thank you. Yeah. My law firm was retained by the unions that represent the workers in the Brumadinho dam collapse, 2019. And my life has been a bit of upheaval since January, 2019. 270 lives were lost by what I consider not an accident, but a foreseeable industrial homicide made by Vale Multinational Company with headquarters in Brazil [ ] German company.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

I mean Max, it's such a powerful word you used, industrial homicide. And nobody has been criminally charged, how does that happen?

Maximiliano Garcez:

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You knew the concerted effort of a very cruel elite in Brazil to allow that to happen. One of the factors, Brazil is the last country on earth, except by Mauritania, to have abolished slavery. We are one of the very few Latin American countries that never punished the torturers and the criminals during the dictatorship.

Maximiliano Garcez:

We have one of the worst Gini index that measure inequality in the world. And we have a state both federal and state government and state apparatus that doesn't deal well with crimes committed by corporations. So we have an incentive to greed, a system in which killing people has been worthwhile. We want to change that and using the Vale as a example.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Can you talk a little bit about the status of worker rights in Brazil more broadly? You're describing a cruel elite. You're describing an intersection of corporate and government elite that results in inequality and unfairness and impunity for, in this case, the deaths of many hundreds of Brazilians. Can you talk a little bit about the status of worker rights in Brazil and how worker rights has evolved in recent years?

Maximiliano Garcez:

We had a labor legislation that was implemented in 1943, and pretty much stayed untouched. Had some aggressive policies during the military dictatorship but still most of it was in place. The years of the Workers' Party power from 2003 to 2016 had several advances. They weren't radical, but several incremental advances that were important. The minimum wage was almost double in its value.

Maximiliano Garcez:

We had recognition of several sectors of the labor movement, we had collective bargaining became stronger. But then after the coup 2016, which I don't consider impeachment, we consider a coup, which one of the aims was to give more powers to the elite and try to destroy the labor sector. Lots of bad things happened, including the labor reform.

Maximiliano Garcez:

I was called in parliament as an expert 2017, into representing Latin American Association of Labor laws, which I had the pleasure to be the director for legislative affairs for a number of years. And then when I was called, I start in my presentation saying that before we analyzed the labor reform, that was sent to parliament by Temer, the president who took over said that there was a preliminary aspect that should be analyzed, that the bill was non-existent because it was signed by someone that occupies the presidency illegally by a coup, done by the MPs. I said that in front of the MPs, it was a big mass in parliament. One of the MP stood up and said he was going to beat me up and they called me a thief, an animal, and the caucus of the left had to intervene to guarantee my rights to speak for 20 minutes. [

[Sounds of angry voices in the Brazilian Parliament].

Maximiliano Garcez:

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They had a reaction even worse than I had imagined, but then labor reform was implemented. We had unthinkable regressive policies that we never imagined would happen. Some sacred cows that we thought would be untouchable, happened.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

When you were just telling that story about speaking in parliament, I'm imagining a scene where you're speaking truth from your experience as a lawyer, as an activist, as a human rights advocate, people are trying to shut you down. And this is at the beginning of a new moment in Brazil, after decades of democratic advancement and the fight against inequality led by labor in many ways.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

And I wonder when you think back on that moment, what did it feel like to be shouted down like that? What did it feel like to be threatened?

Maximiliano Garcez:

Actually they almost made a service to me because that really gave visibility to the accusation I wanted to do. In minutes it was in newspapers, they intercepted me, they made a report about that, and I also have to give credits to several lawyers of my law firm. We spent a couple months before the event, when I received the invitation.

Maximiliano Garcez:

We went through the tax forms of every MP that served on the labor board, in favor of the measure. And we discovered which companies they owned. I had the list of labor and human rights violations by the MPs that were present in the room. And after the big mass and the caucus of the left guaranteed that I could speak, then I said that the most popular sport in Brazil wasn't soccer but was violating labor rights.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Wow.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And then I mentioned as an example, the name of the companies of the MPs present in the room, then another round of shouting came up. So they ate the bait. Coming back to our first question, the state of labor rights, I explained to them that the labor reform they were presenting, which allowed outsourcing without any limits, it's like workers are treated as a merchandise that you can rent or sell as if they were objects.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And I explained to them that not only would it be awful for the employees but as a paradox, it would be even for the business elite. Because we have the elite, industrialists that are very myopic, very short-term. The population is going from one outsourced job to another, and then to be illegally hired as a one individual company and then you are unemployed.

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Maximiliano Garcez:

You cannot have a proper trajectory of life, nor you can organize a competent labor force, organize a labor world that way. Also it destroys a capacity of the internal consumption, which is a motor for appropriate economy. So it goes even beyond their interests in the medium and long term. And that happens exactly as I said, the consumption in Brazil after the couple of years of labor reform was implemented.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And this zero-hour contract, they implemented copying the tragic example of England was implemented and the salaries dropped in several sectors depending on the consumption of the working class, which had greatly increased and under Lula's government collapsed. Which created the closing factories, with yesterday Forbes announced they're leaving Brazil.

Maximiliano Garcez:

Bolsanaro, which also implemented awful things in the labor area, said last year that Argentina would collapse having a so-called communist government. Then they're increasing their investments in China and Argentina. So our elite is very, very ignorant, and sometimes they shoot the workers and shoot themselves on the feet also.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So decades of struggle for the expansion of democracy to Indigenous people, Black Brazilians, women, the struggle against forced labor and for the environment. And then we come to this moment, in 2016-2017, with the election of a new government, or as you call it, a coup, that brings in a new government. And you're standing there at this precipice in this moment and starting to watch what the movement has fought for and built decades be eroded.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Can you tell us a little bit more about other rights in the country that you are concerned about and are watching Brazilians experience a rollback in?

Maximiliano Garcez:

Yeah, we are having not only labor rights, but several civil and political rights that any liberal democracy has, to be eroded. Police brutality has been commonplace in Brazil. There are frequent pictures when you have a rally by the left, by labor movement have incredible police brutalities. Only during the darkest years of the military dictatorship, we had several cases of police invading unions without warrant, myself and several protestors and impeachment felt the taste of tear gas and pepper spray. And when you have right wing rallies, on defense of the military dictatorship, trying to overthrow Dilma's government, you have the police taking selfies with the protestors and helping them and being incredibly gentle to them. So quite a lot of what's happening in the U.S.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

As you're drawing this picture, my mind is going back to where we started with the role of companies, privatized companies, companies like Vale and the impunity with which corporations are able to operate

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despite negative impacts up to and including death. I wonder if you could draw a little bit more of a connection for us between impunity and government and impunity and corporations and how they're connected.

Maximiliano Garcez:

This is not anything new in the world or globalization made it worse, but there is a famous one in 1972 or '71 speech by Salvador Allende in the UN, in which he denounces the growing power of corporations eroding democracy, which only got worse. AT&T, for instance, was one of the main drivers of the coup, Chile in '64.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And nowadays we have this new form of overthrowing governments by lawfare, by faking judicial processes or fake votes in parliament with the help of corporations. 2018, we had something awful happen in Brazil. The judge, that in a very bias manner, was able to put Lula in jail, and he was the front runner in the polls and most likely would be elected.

Maximiliano Garcez:

He was prevented from running, and then the same judge was in talks with the opposition, the candidate, Bolsanaro, during the campaign, and after Bolsanaro got elected, he became the minister of justice. So once my kids want to know, to explain to them what happened, and then I said imagine that our team is playing our nemesis.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And then the referee gives three penalty kicks for the other team. And by the end of the game, they invite the referee to be president of the team, that's pretty much what happened. So it has been very challenging to be a lawyer in these terms. And now I remember something that I think the most intense lesson I had in last years concerning political science and democracy was given by oldest son during the coup.

Maximiliano Garcez:

When the Senate was voting for the final impeachment of Dilma, which was pretty much a simulation, that we knew that the result would happen, I didn't want to follow, that was very depressing. So I took my kids in Brasilia to a park for us to play. And then the elite started throwing fire crackers all over town. Then I knew it was the 53rd vote.

Maximiliano Garcez:

So I tried to prevent my kids from seeing, but I did cry a bit. And then my oldest one, when we came home, he said, "Daddy, I'd want to talk to you. What they did to Dilma was wrong, right, to put Temer, say it was wrong." Then he started, "Daddy, when a company does something bad to an employee, then you go and you tell the judge what happens, right? And then the judge tells them to stop and correct what happens."

Maximiliano Garcez:

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"Exactly. That's right my son." Then he said, "Daddy, I have an idea. You tell Dilma to go to the judge to tell her that what was done was illegal and that he's going to put her back." Then I said, "That's a very good idea, but she has already done that." "Yes, and so she's going to go back?" "No, the judge siding with Temer."

Maximiliano Garcez:

"Really daddy?" Then he tried to come up with an answer, and 30 seconds or so, okay, he just left the room, sad. So for that boy, there is still the guinea of the concept of democracy, of rule of law. You still have judges in Berlin was destroyed. At the end of the day, good beats evil, I hope one day he can recreate the concept in Brazil, but things only got worse.

Maximiliano Garcez:

And we had election which was fraudulent, the coup and the election has lots of to do with international elite and lots of things that are going to hurt the Brazilian elite in the short- and the long-term.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

When I'm hearing you describe this, you're painting a picture that I feel is really we've seen in a lot of countries: the corporate and government sort of collusion, resulting in the retraction of democracy for average people. And that there's an international dynamic and component and a domestic one. And I wonder, you're a leader in an international network of lawyers, that is trying to look at labor law all around the world.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

What if you could expand a little bit and talk about what would it actually mean for workers to achieve true democracy? What does it look like in terms of how government treats worker rights and how corporations relate to workers?

Maximiliano Garcez:

More and more, it's clear to me that the way capitalism works, that democracy is just something that is present if it's convenient or not. The beliefs they have in liberal democracy, we can see that the elite drops it off whenever it's inconvenient. It came to such an incredible greed that now it's becoming clear that they are going against their own interests.

Maximiliano Garcez:

Not to mention climate change that also is going to prevent corporations to have profits if there's incredible calamities, even they are going to suffer. If the Brazilian elite is myopic as I shown, with international elite also has difficulty with dealing with the interest of greed in the short term and long-term destroying workers' rights and democracy is something that bites them in the head right now.

Maximiliano Garcez:

It's very hard to fight, to defend labor rights and democracy right now because we have seen a downward trend.

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Shawna Bader-Blau:

Thank you to my brother Maximiliano Garcez. I appreciate the time and the energy, the vision and the analysis. Thank you so much for joining us.

Maximiliano Garcez:

Pleasure. Thanks so much.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

I'm so grateful to Max for helping us connect some of the dots. A few weeks after we recorded our interview, the news broke that Vale agreed to pay \$7 billion in compensation, but get this: Nearly 90 percent of this is being paid to the state and not the families of the workers. But Max, and the association of union leaders are not giving up.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Where governments and corporations attempt to repress, worker's movements push back. The Brazilian labor movement and Max are inspirations. After the break, we'll hear from Sergey Antusevich in Belarus.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

My next guest is Sergey Antusevich, vice president of the Belorussian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions. Belarus workers have endured repression for decades. They have risked their lives to protest restrictions on their democratic freedoms. That's why workers are now striking in massive numbers to demand democracy. Many have been jailed for their participation, and some leaders have even been sentenced to years in prison.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Worker strikes are a big way that workers and their unions have participated in democracy struggles around the world. Organizing and striking workers in South Africa helped bring down apartheid. In Tunisia and Egypt, the independent labor movement grew in size and stature because of the brave stance unions took during the Arab Spring protests of 2011.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Today, we are seeing tenacious worker organizing and strikes for democracy in Myanmar and in Belarus, where our conversation with Sergey Antusevich begins with a massive resistance movement led in large part by workers. The movement began last summer to protest unfair and undemocratic presidential elections.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

These protests continue even now, despite massive police brutality and the arrest of thousands, many of whom have been beaten and tortured by security forces. Take us to that moment in August of last year,

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when the presidential election happened and afterwards people rejected the outcome. When is the first time you really realized that this was a different time in history than ever before.

Sergey Antusevich:

After use excessive violence against peaceful protestors, in many factories began to express their position actively, protest against violence and fraud. And started at first time in modern Belarus setting up strike committees. We have ban for strike, organizing strike. The protesters had their demands: resignation of Lukashenko and his clique, and an end in violence and the repression and holding fair elections. At same time, as the call of our organization, the KDP, the workers and employees began to quit state trade unions and try to create independent trade unions.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Wow.

Sergey Antusevich:

The protestors gave rise appear in numerous civil society initiatives and NGOs, new organization have appeared where they have never existed, particularly in healthcare institutions and educational establishments. We met many times these people, doctors, teachers, students. It's incredible, really. I don't have this feeling before.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So across sectors, blue-collar workers in factories and in other blue-collar industries, white-collar workers from teachers to people in hospitals and universities. Across the whole variety of types of employment in Belarus, we have independent worker committees forming and people joining independent unions.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

It really feels like the worker's movement is deeply at the heart of the democracy movement in Belarus. And I wonder if you could tell me why that is, where does that come from, that spirit of organizing and worker collective power and engagement?

Sergey Antusevich:

I try to explain our legislation system and repression regime, repression of freedoms, freedom of assembly, freedom of association, and Belarus in the black list, it's a short list in every year in ILO, International Labor Conference. I think this year was another trigger for changing the regime was attitude of Lukashenko towards the COVID-19 problem.

Sergey Antusevich:

At first, he denied at all the existence of the epidemic. Then he began inventing his own version of the pandemic, and its treatment, about each time trying to conceal in real statistics and extent of the disease. This disdainful attitude towards the people also played a very important role in escalating the protesting.

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Sergey Antusevich:

Of course, finally, Lukashenko came to election having imprisoned practically all his real opponents. Svetlana Tikhanovskaya who went to the polls instead of her husband Sergei Tikhanovsky, who was imprisoned by Lukashenko. Thus personified the fight for fair elections only. There was only one point in her program. It's the main problem of our life: holding fair election in the country after the victory within six months.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

And she represents as we understand it, a large number of women leaders in the country of Belarus across civil society and the emerging activist class. Can you tell us a little bit more about the role of young women and women leaders in this movement?

Sergey Antusevich:

Women began the protests after brutal violence, after August 10th and 11th when a lot of people was beaten, a lot of people was detained, a lot of people jailed and opened criminal cases. And the first rally, woman rally in Minsk was really, really, really so emotional, so hard when women stay with flowers in white-color clothes.

Sergey Antusevich:

I not have enough words to describe my feelings. It's very, very, very strong and emotional. And after that starts other rallies, I have a birthday on the sixteenth of August, it was first 300 rally in Minsk. I never seen a lot of people on my birthday.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Yeah. Well, you're painting such a vivid picture of the rallies, women wearing white and holding flowers, public squares, filling with more and more people. And, brother Sergey, when you think about the future for your country, what does a free Belarus look like to you?

Sergey Antusevich:

For me it's a free country, pro-European country. It's so hard because 26 years people can't do, can't participate in the real social activities, in real civil society organizations. Our organization of real unions it's only 10,000 people. It's little, another one pro-state federation, had 4 million-and a half-million people.

Sergey Antusevich:

We need to build strong unions. Now I know that we need a lot of training and education, collective bargaining, organizing, campaigning, occupational safety and health at work and issues. Because millions of people affiliated to the state controlled unions, had no idea what real unions should be.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Brother Sergey, could we take a minute on that? Because I think not all of our listeners will understand the role of a state labor federation. It's not the role of a trade union really. It plays a different kind of

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role in a repressive state. Can you just tell us a little bit about the state controlled federation? What was its job? What did it do?

Sergey Antusevich:

In 2002, when the first time I was in Germany, I asked about a role of worker's organization in the fascism time. And the answer was at the enterprises level, this organization sometimes help people. And at the national level, it's only voted for state, for president. It's not a real union, it's... I tend to call this social dialect process but sometimes we participated in this meeting.

Sergey Antusevich:

It's real Soviet-type system. When you can't criticize authorities. Maybe sometimes government, but not president.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So a state labor federation has members that are workers, but they don't play the role in the society at the enterprise level with employers or with the state of fighting or advocating for workers' rights. Contrast that to your independent trade union federation, and your hopes for the future of the independent labor movement in Belarus. What do you hope become the gains of the new independent unions of Belarus?

Sergey Antusevich:

I saw that when we don't have a social dialogue in the country for 26 years. As long as the regime has been established, social dialogue exists as a formality in order to disorient the world community. And formal government, formal trade unions and employers play similar role in our country. And in our situation, all social partners will have to start the work on building up social dialogue in the country, particularly from zero. For us it's a very important task.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So social dialogue, where workers and their representatives, employers and their representatives, and the government actually negotiate over labor market and wages in working condition, minimum standards, and other things. Is this possible to achieve, absent democracy?

Sergey Antusevich:

I expect that without real social dialogue, we don't have any chance to build in democracy in our country. Only on international labor standards, we must build new model of social dialogue and we will have a new process of negotiation, real negotiation with employees, with employers, employees with employers.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So brother Sergey, let's turn to what's happening right now. In The New York Times opinion piece that you published, very powerful piece you published in August of last year, you closed by saying change is happening in Belarus, and that Belorussians are ready to confront the uncertainty going forward and that the uncertainty of the future.

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Shawna Bader-Blau:

Talk to me about that uncertainty right now. Do you feel you've turned the page and we're headed for a new Belarus. Does the movement feel the momentum is toward democracy and toward openness? How are you feeling? How is the movement feeling right now, months into the struggle?

Sergey Antusevich:

This article was with real emotions. In August, it was incredible seeing when we had a lot of meetings, a lot of marching, a lot of rallies. But now, we live in new Belarus, because people were changing, people opinions, majority of people voted for democracy. But we have police state regime. And we have old legislation, a lot of obstacles.

Sergey Antusevich:

For example, when we establish a new trade union organization, we must have permission from the authorities. Yesterday, we received three cases when authority is forbidden to us to establish and legalize our organization.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

So the authorities are blocking your right to form international unions in court?

Sergey Antusevich:

Yes.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Sergey, why is the government so afraid of the trade union movement?

Sergey Antusevich:

Because they always says that workers voted for president, and voted for strong state, and these rules. Now, this not true.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

You were saying earlier, there's been a fundamental change in the people.

Sergey Antusevich:

Yes.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

What else has changed, do you think permanently in Belarus?

Sergey Antusevich:

General change is in the heart is the minds. Today people knows that a pro-democracy society is the majority. It's not 10 or 20 percent, it's the majority, up to 80, up to 90 percent of people. Might be in the village, in the small towns where people don't have tablets, computers and see only state television,

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they recognized this political regime like power, like a real power. And in Minsk, in big cities and towns, no.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

And I was thinking about your long leadership in civil society through years of repression and in this movement, and I know you must have drawn inspiration from somewhere. Where do you get your inspiration personally? Where do you get your drive to stay in this struggle, and in this movement for workers and for a more free Belarus.

Sergey Antusevich:

My inspiration is the people, people who stand and fighting after this August. I know that I have neighbors, I have workers at several enterprises, a lot of enterprises in Belarus, who want to live in a free and democratic Belarus and in a European country.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

I really want to thank you for sharing so much of this powerful story with us today.

Sergey Antusevich:

I thank you, because it's very important for me to share this information and sometimes I can't find, English words and emotions for explaining.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

I felt every single one of your emotions, Sergey. It's a powerful story of workers coming together, brave, and standing up for fairness in their country after years of repression. It's a powerful story, your story, my brother Sergey, of a life dedicated to your people, your country, your labor movement, and for a vision of the future that inspires I'm sure everyone who hears this story. Thank you so much, and thank you for sharing your experience with us.

Sergey Antusevich:

Thank you.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

Now that's bravery. In the midst of a brutal regime, in the face of repression meant to crush them, the brave workers of Belarus are striking, marching and never giving up. And as they build new unions, they are making sure the rights and interests of workers are part of a democratic future. As different as the challenges for labor are in Brazil and Belarus, there's a key concept that unites the efforts there and beyond: Labor rights are a foundation of true democracy. It's a concept that we know is under attack around the globe, but people are pushing back and building a better future. Which is why it is so vital to share these stories and celebrate the people and organizations that are making a difference.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

## THE SOLIDARITY CENTER PODCAST

Defending Democracy: Workers on the Front Lines

Host: Shawna Bader-Blau, Solidarity Center Executive Director

Guests: Maximilian Garcez, president, Brazilian Association of Union Lawyers

Sergey Antusevich, vice president, Belorussian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions

Thanks again to both of my guests, Maximiliano Garcez and Sergey Antusevich, two heroes. Your work is inspiring and contributing to a more just future for the billions of us.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

And thanks to you for listening. Don't forget to subscribe to the Solidarity Center Podcast on Apple Podcasts or wherever you find your shows, and learn more about the Solidarity Center at [solidaritycenter.org](https://solidaritycenter.org) and through our social media on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Tune in next week, when we'll talk to our Solidarity Center colleague Preeda, about organizing migrant workers in Thailand in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Preeda:

Both Thai worker and the foreigner, migrant worker, have the same demand. They want Thailand to ratify the ILO Convention number 87 and 98. I think that 100 years already that ILO established with support of Thailand, but Thailand still has not decided to ratify this core convention.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

This podcast is a production of the [storyproducer.com](https://storyproducer.com), with the executive producer, Tyler Green and producer and engineer, Adam Yoffe. The Solidarity Center Podcast is a member of the DC Labor Radio Podcast Network. A special thanks to the staff of the Solidarity Center, who assisted with this podcast.

Shawna Bader-Blau:

In more than 60 countries around the world, we work to ensure a righteous future for workers, dignity, freedom, equality, and justice. For the Solidarity Center Podcast, I'm Shawna Bader-Blau, thanks for listening.