

Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine Statement To the International trade union movement

Originally posted here 11.03.2014

[threecolumns]The People of Ukraine took to the Maidan in Kiev and other Ukrainian cities, struggling peacefully for a civilized, European future. Protesters sought democracy and decent social protections for working people in the face of the corruption and lawlessness of Yanukovich regime and they were victorious. The Confederation of Free Trade Unions of Ukraine and its member organizations took an active part in this struggle from the first days. Unfortunately there were victims. As a result of armed violence against Ukrainian people more than a hundred killed and nearly 300 missing. More than 2000 people were wounded.

Having understood that people cannot be defeated even by force, Viktor Yanukovich together with his associates fled, leaving the country devastated. This staggeringly corrupt clique emptied the state treasury and bankrupted the country.

During this difficult time for the state and the people, Ukraine was subjected to aggressive interventions by the Russian Federation, which, having abused all International and inter-governmental treaties, invaded the territory of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and actively destabilized the situation across the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine.

Naked aggression of the armed forces of another country against the peaceful citizens of Ukraine has led to profound political, economic and social crisis. Unemployment and

decreasing in living standards, already a reality under Yanukovych, have worsened in the current emergency.

That is why our country now more than ever needs international support and attention to social and economic problems as well as financial assistance. Unfortunately, we are confronted here with another tragedy, that of economic austerity. The failed policies of austerity are inexplicably still supported by some parts of the international community and international financial institutions. Recent experience in Europe shows that International Financial institutions (IFI) continue to demand a type of austerity that disproportionately impacts lower income workers and their families. This targeting of average people is unacceptable and counter productive, all the more so in a country with extreme inequalities of wealth. Ukraine's wages, pensions and other social payments are the lowest in Europe. Combined with a high unemployment rate, an effort to push austerity cuts in social benefits for the poor risks further destabilizing the country. Social insecurity was one of the major reasons pushing the Ukrainian people to Maidan.

Threats of western supported austerity were also heavily used by the Yanukovych regime, and now by Russian propaganda, to intimidate average Ukrainians against their European sympathies. Austerity cuts to pensions, wages, fuel or utility subsidies that disproportionately impact workers and the poor will fan the flames of conflict in Ukraine. Further, we believe that aid proposals from the IFIs that do not address wealth inequality as root cause of economic malaise and decline in Ukraine are doomed to failure. Wealth inequality is not just the result of corruption and undemocratic governance; it is a core cause of these problems.

We call on the international trade union movement to support the efforts of the KVPU and its member organizations in the struggle for peace for our country, its independence, integrity and the inviolability of its borders. We call for trade union solidarity support for democratic values, decent

work, and a decent level of life for Ukrainian workers. The current conflict as well threatens peace and progress across Europe.

We address the International Trade Union Confederation and global trade unions asking for clear statements of support for the Ukrainian trade unions in their assertion of fundamental rights and freedoms of working people. We ask the international trade union movement to strongly condemn armed incursions into the territory of Ukraine. We ask the international trade union movement to further strongly condemn austerity conditions that target poor and working Ukrainians, as a part of any foreign aid.

Mikhailo Volynets

Chairman of the KVPU[/threecolumns]