

Ukraine Labor Law Reform Campaign

August 5, 2022



We stand in solidarity with the people of Ukraine, fighting a brutal invasion by Putin's Russia. We wish their people's resistance victory over this criminal aggression.

However, it is with dismay that we learn—right in the middle of their life-and-death struggle—that Ukraine's working people have come under attack on a second front: laws attacking their labor rights and working conditions have been passing through the Ukrainian parliament.

The latest and worst of these, Laws 5371 and 5161, were adopted on July 19.

[This petition](#) explains how the Laws would destroy Ukrainian workers' rights and working conditions if they were allowed to come into effect.

They would legalize extremes of exploitation in Ukraine that would also endanger workers' rights across the whole of Europe.

One man has the power to stop this disastrous legislation—President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelenskyy. He can ratify the laws or veto them.

Since it is vital that Laws 5161 and 5371 not be ratified, this petition calls on President Zelensky to stand with Ukraine's workers by exercising his presidential veto on both laws.

They must be replaced with measures which would increase the security of workers and enable them and their families to survive the devastation of war and build a new and stronger Ukraine.

Demand that President Zelenskyy act! Sign the petition here! Send it to your networks!

President Zelenskyy must veto anti-worker Laws 5161 and 5371!

Dear President Zelenskyy,

Expressing our sincere solidarity with the people of Ukraine in the face of Russian aggression, we

members of European and global trade unions call on you to impose your presidential veto on newly adopted controversial Laws 5371 and 5161. Otherwise, millions of workers could lose their protection against abuses by employers.

Law 5161 (introducing “zero-hour” contracts) and Law 5371 (“On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts to Simplify the Regulation of Labour Relations in Small and Medium Enterprises and Reduce the Administrative Burden on Entrepreneurship”) were approved in their second reading by the Ukrainian Parliament on July 19.

We are concerned that the possible implementation of these Laws will result in effective abolition of important labour rights and some of the very last protections safeguarding workers against the arbitrary actions of employers, cases of which have become more frequent in this time of war and economic downturn.

If Law 5371 is ratified, a new chapter III-B entitled “Simplified regime regulating labour relations” will be added to the Labour Code of Ukraine, allowing employers to “contractually curtail” workers’ rights in enterprises employing up to 250 workers—in other words the rights of the vast majority of employees.

For workers, the “simplified regime” will mean arbitrary dismissals, overtime work on spurious grounds, or ignoring collective agreements in terms of wage payment. It will also jeopardise workers’ possibilities to unionise and to defend their rights via trade unions.

Under current circumstances, the adoption of these Laws, which have been strongly criticised by both Ukrainian and international trade unions, would aggravate social inequality and hamper social dialogue. Furthermore, it may also undermine Ukraine’s prospects for European integration.

The Parliamentary Committee on Ukraine’s Integration into the European Union has found Law 5371 to be inconsistent with the minimal social standards of the European Association Agreement. Nor does it comply with the conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

It does not meet a number of minimum standards enshrined in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the European Social Charter (revised) and other European Union regulations.

It also violates standards stipulated by the ILO Conventions No. 132, No. 135, No. 158, and even founding Convention No. 1 (1919), on the limitation of working hours in industrial enterprises to 8 hours a day and 48 hours a week.

We, the undersigned, therefore respectfully urge you to consider the already precarious situation of workers in Ukraine and use the presidential veto on Laws 5161 and 5371. Rejection of this legislation will ease the burden on millions of Ukrainians already suffering from the brutal Russian invasion, and so help strengthen their resistance to it.

Sign here.