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Dear Brother,

More than once did Interregional Trade Union of Autoworkers (ITUA) receive brotherly support and solidarity from the IMF and its affiliates. However, worsening situation with basic labour rights in Russia forces us to turn to IMF again.

Recently ITUA shop floor organizations and their members have faced increasing pressure from government authorities, particularly from the local Departments for the Prevention of Extremism created by the Investigative Committee at the Public Prosecutor's Office, local Prosecutor's Offices themselves and from the Departments of Internal Affairs. Pressure from employers has also increased. It is our view that this pressure is aimed at suppressing ITUA activities at the national level and destroying shop floor organizations created by workers.

We would like to draw your attention to the following facts.

What raises special concern is the fact that a number of leaflets issued and distributed by the activists of the ITUA union at Tsentrosvarmash plant in Tver, Russia were included in the 'Federal List of Extremist Materials', composed by the Ministry of Justice. The materials were deemed 'extremist' by Zavolzhsy District Court in Tver on August 28, 2009, but ITUA representatives were not informed of that case. Union members learned about the court ruling only after the 'List of Extremist Materials' had been published on the official web page of the Ministry of Justice. To date, union activists still haven't been able to get hold of the court ruling – that's why they can't challenge it in court. As for the leaflets, they solely deal with labour rights protection: creating shop floor organization, demanding fair payment for night work, union's anti-crisis programme, and fight against precarious employment.

Federal Security Service (FSS), a Russian special service, considered initiating a case against Dmitry Kozhnev, chairman of the Tsentrosvarmash union, under item 1 of article 280 ('Public call for extremist activity') of the Russian Criminal Code. This didn't happen. However, in April and June Kozhnev was summoned by FSS for 'interviews'. FSS officials didn't give him the case materials, but asked him to sign post factum about ten official notices on the dismissal of a criminal case.

Instead of protecting the union from rights violations and employer's repressions, Tver Prosecutor's Offices themselves put pressure on union activists who create shop floor organizations. Thus, in November 2009 activists of the unions at Tver Wagon Building plant and Tsentrosvarmash V. Kornilov, D. Kozhnev, E. Vinogradov, V. Sergeev and V. Kremko were summoned by Zavolzhsy District Prosecutor's Office for giving testimony (the summons were given by employers). Activists were asked questions about the procedure of creating shop floor organizations, their activities, number and names of their members, preparing and distributing union materials, union leaders' travels and meetings.

In October 2009 ITUA co-chairman and the chairman of the union at AvtoVAZ plant in Togliatti, Russia Petr Zolotarev was twice summoned by the Department for the Prevention of Extremism (so-called Center 'E') prior to the mass protests organized by the union. Center 'E' officials questioned Zolotarev about the union's planned activities. They also asked who will take part in those activities, what demands will be made and who will address the protesters. In July 2009 Zolotarev was returning by train from a union meeting in Moscow. When the train approached the station 'Zhigulevskoe More', several Center 'E' officials joined Zolotarev in his compartment. They questioned him about his trip and meetings in Moscow. Zolotarev feels that he's been under surveillance all the time.

In February 2009 chairman of ITUA union at GM Auto plant in Saint-Petersburg, Russia Evgeny Ivanov was also summoned by Center 'E', where the officers tried to induce him to 'cooperate'. For them 'cooperation' meant informing Center 'E' about the work of the plant and the activities of the unions in the city and the surrounding area. The same offer was made to ITUA co-chairman and the chairman of the union at Ford MC plant in Vsevolozhsk, Russia Alexei Etmanov.

In the meantime, union members and activists face ongoing pressure from employers. After the union organized so-called 'Italian strikes' (work-by-the-rules) on October 21 and November 11-20 at GM Auto plant in Saint-Petersburg (the demands were: switching premiums for the increases in guaranteed pay, pay increases, more freedom in using holiday time, abolishment of summarized annual recording of the working time and introduction of 40-hour work week), chairman of the union at the plant E. Ivanov and union activist O. Shafikova were fired. Union activists A. Tsaregorodsev and I. Dorosevich face increasing pressure (the administration forced them to combine tasks without additional payment, moved them to unfamiliar work site and took disciplinary action against them). Management representatives propagandize against the union at shop floors.

Prosecutor's Offices and other authorities don't take any action regarding employers' illegal activities. Over a year ago many ITUA leaders and shop floor activists were physically assaulted, but the investigation still hasn't resulted in anything at all.

All these facts raise serious concern about the fate of ITUA, its shop floor organizations, activists and members. All-Russian Confederation of Labour (ACL) has prepared a detailed report based on the evidence of trade union rights violations, ITUA cases included. A complaint to ILO against Russian Federation is being prepared. However, the situation changes very fast, and in the unfavorable direction. This is why we turn to the IMF, asking to look for an effective response to the attack against its affiliate. We ask IMF to launch a global campaign of solidarity with ITUA.

Help and support from the international labour movement, particularly from our brotherly unions welded together by the IMF can secure the survival of our organization and the personal safety of its members and activists today.

We are ready to answer any questions regarding the facts mentioned above and render to IMF all the additional materials we have on this case.

In Solidarity,

Alexei Etmanov,

**Co-Chairman,
ITUA**