MTZ Belarus - Caperpillar's corporate and social responsibility

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**Dear Ladies and Sirs:**

We write to draw your attention to the ongoing human rights violations in Belarus. Below, we summarize recent developments in Belarus and note that the US, UK and EU have condemned the brutal handling of the recent protests by Belarusian government and have not recognised the recent presidential elections in Belarus as free and fair.

Caterpillar is one of the main suppliers of engines to the Minsk Tractor Plant (MTZ), a large state-owned enterprise located in Minsk, Belarus (<https://eng.belta.by/economics/view/belarusian-mtz-tractors-to-get-stage-v-emission-standard-engines-116932-2018/>).Recently, several members of MTZ's strike committee were arrested and detained as the current political regime attempts to intimidate workers intending to go on strike (<https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/odr/belarusian-labour-activists-pressured-political-crisis-drags/>). Profits earned by MTZ go directly to the Belarusian government that channels these funds to brutally suppress peaceful demonstrations, limit free speech, and falsify elections. Therefore, we strongly believe that commercial relationships between Caterpillar and MTZ go against 1. Caterpillar’s Human Rights policy; 2. Caterpillar’s corporate  values, particularly the Caterpillar’s value of “integrity”; 3. Caterpillar’s ESG commitments and Corporate Social Responsibility; 4. UK’s Global Human Rights Act passed by the UK parliament on 6 July 2020.

We urge Caterpillar to 1. terminate commercial relationship with MTZ and any other state-owned enterprises in Belarus as soon as practically possible; 2. demand that all Caterpillar’s sound commercial counterparts in Belarus respect and honour the “principles of freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining” and 'strive to   eliminate discrimination in the workplace' as stated in Caterpillar’s human rights policy: <https://www.caterpillar.com/en/company/governance/political-engagement/human-rights.html>

3) require that your commercial partners in Belarus adhere to the values and principles of your Code of Conduct that claims no toleration of intimidation and harassment and prohibits discrimination in your corporate dealings worldwide.

Overview of the recent developments in Belarus:

The Presidential election in Belarus on 9 August, along with the entire election campaign, was carried out with numerous breaches of electoral law, the current Belarusian Constitution and international electoral standards.

Mr Alexander Lukashenko announced his victory based on his claim to have received an absurd and unverifiable 80% of the vote.

Numerous notifications of falsifications, the data from alternative vote calculations, surveys on the election day, provided evidence that the official results had nothing to do with reality. As a result, Belarusians across the country protested against the falsification of the election results.

The government took unlawful measures, disproportionate in their cruelty, against peaceful demonstrators – using fire and noise grenades, rubber batons and in some cases even fired guns using live ammunition.

Around 7000 participants were arrested, detained and penalised without due court process. But a real shock came when the first of the arrested people started being released. Numerous witnesses have confirmed about mass rapes, tortures and immoral abuse in jails. At this point of time (24/8/2020) 6 deaths have been confirmed as a result of cruel arrests or detention; and hundreds of badly injured people remain in hospitals.

The Human Rights Centre “Viasna”, in partnership with the World Organisation Against Torture (OMCT), organized the collection of information about the victims of torture and ill-treatment, in Belarus, and from 12 to 20 August received testimonies from more than 450 victims corroborated with photographs and videos. More than hundred victims were already interviewed on video.

Some units of the Belarusian army were deployed on the streets of Minsk in recent days, after 21st August 2020, supposedly to “guard monuments against the protesters”.   This increases the likelihood of direct involvement of the Belarusian army in suppressing peaceful protesters given that protests are very likely to continue

Whilst this regime remains in power, it is highly likely that these crimes will never be subject to a lawful investigation and court. In addition to the military violence, the repressions are used against people with alternative views such as ungrounded dismissals, blackmail, treats of detention.

Yours faithfully,

Respectfully yours

**P**ROFESSIONAL **U**NION OF **B**ELARUSIANS IN **B**RITAIN

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