

Ms Agnès PANNIER-RUNACHER
Minister for the Energy Transition
Hôtel de Roquelaure
246, boulevard Saint-Germain
75700 Paris 07 SP
secretariat.pannier-runacher@climat-energie.gouv.fr

Ref. JWG/IB/JKD/mb

Brussels, 25 August 2023

Trade union action is not a crime. Stop the repression.

Dear Minister, Dear Ms Pannier-Runacher,

We have been informed that the French government is prosecuting leaders and activists from our affiliate CGT-FNME for organising and participating in trade union protests against the reform of the French pension system. We strongly condemn this and maintain that trade union action is not a crime. We see these prosecutions as politically motivated, with a view to suppress trade union opposition to government policy. We ask you to stop these actions immediately and withdraw the cases against our trade union colleagues.

On 6 September, Sébastien Menesplier, the General Secretary of CGT-FNME and a member of the Board of the CGT Confederation will be summoned to the gendarmerie in Montmorency. This is in connection with electricity and gas workers' protests against the destruction of the French pension system. These actions were supported by a united front of trade unions and a broad group of other organisations across French society and representatives of EPSU and industriAll Europe also joined the demonstration on 1 May in Paris.

While there have been several attempts to pursue legal cases against trade union activists, it is the first time that the French state targets the leadership of the trade union movement and in particular of a trade union whose members were organising actions with the broad support of electricity and gas workers. As such they were one of the spearheads of the protests in defense of workers' pensions.

The campaign against pension reform follows a number of other powerful and ultimately successful initiatives by the union to oppose the privatisation of EDF, the Hercule restructuring proposals and to demand a decent pay increase for workers in the sector. We see your government's actions as taking revenge on a powerful union, to criminalise union activity and to give a signal to other unions to back off. This is totally unacceptable, and we will fully support the CGT-FNME and other unions in their just defence of trade union rights and in standing up against trade union repression.

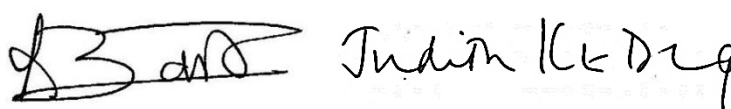
We also have grave concerns not only about your government's actions targeting environmental and human rights groups that have criticised government policies but also the Kasbarian-Bergé law that seeks to prevent workplace occupations and that could also allow force to be used to prevent strike pickets. We remind the government of its obligations under European and international law as set out in the European Convention on Human Rights and the various ILO Conventions.

We look forward to your reply and to confirmation that you will end the persecution of trade union leaders and activists. We will stand by our French colleagues and defend their trade union rights, which are trade union rights of all workers.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Willem Goudriaan
EPSU General Secretary



Isabelle Barthes and Judith Kirton-Darling
IndustriAll-Europe Deputy General Secretaries