



**BWI** • Building and Wood Workers' International  
**BHI** • Bau- und Holzarbeiter Internationale  
**BTI** • Byggnads- och Träarbetar-Internationalen  
**IBB** • Internationale des Travailleurs du Bâtiment et du Bois  
**ICM** • Internacional de Trabajadores de la Construcción y la Madera

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**Mrs. Ana Brnabić**  
**Prime Minister**  
Government of Republic of Serbia  
Nemanjina street 11  
Republic of Serbia  
[predsednikvlade@gov.rs](mailto:predsednikvlade@gov.rs)

Geneva and Belgrade, 18 November 2021

**Re: Urgent action required related to violation of workers' rights on the construction site of the Linglong car tire factory in Zrenjanin**

Dear Madam Prime Minister,

On behalf of the Building and Wood Workers' International, which represents 12 million workers in the building, building materials, wood and forestry sectors in 127 countries worldwide, including in Serbia, we are appalled to learn that the management of China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. LTD, branch, Belgrade, a contractor of the Chinese company Linglong International Europe Ltd. Zrenjanin, seriously violates fundamental workers' rights in Serbia.

Around 500 Vietnamese workers are lodged in unacceptable, substandard accommodations without proper sanitary conditions in times of pandemic. They are exposed to dangerous health and safety conditions. The beds do not have mattresses, but planks covered with thin quilts.

Workers are obliged to work for 26 days a month, and if, for any reason, they do not fulfil that requirement and they work at least a day less, they will be punished by not being paid for the entire month. Workers do not receive salary slips. Moreover, upon the arrival of workers from Vietnam, they had to hand over their passports to the employer. There is no evidence that workers have residence and work permits, and yet they were asked to hand over their passports to the employer.

In addition, they are not provided with heating, electricity and drinking water. There is no hot water for showering and clothes are washed by hand with cold water and dried on existing ropes where they store other things because they do not have closets.

The health of the workers is also endangered by the omnipresent COVID-19 virus. Workers wanted to be vaccinated, but when they contacted the authorities of the company, they were

told that it was complicated and that it would not be possible. They have not been informed that they can receive the vaccine without any conditions. When someone falls ill, he is isolated in an improvised hospital room where he stays until he recovers - without paid compensation.

These issues constitute flagrant infringements of international human rights, including fundamental labour standards and ILO Conventions that have been ratified by Serbia. We strongly protest the behaviour and activities of the contractor, especially, the investor, the Chinese company Linglong International Europe Ltd. Zrenjanin that has failed to conduct due diligence on human and workers' rights.

These serious problems persist due to the apparent impunity of companies operating in the construction industry. They violate both national laws and international labour standards. What makes abuses even more egregious is that migrant workers are being exploited in publicly financed projects.

On the other hand, impunity in these and similar cases may create a practice that local workers will be exposed to inhumane conditions.

We call up on you, Ms. Prime Minister, to use your good offices and take other action, if necessary, to end these serious violations of international labour standards and national law. The China Energy Engineering Group Tianjin Electric Power Construction Co. LTD, branch, Belgrade should conduct proper due diligence, and conduct itself responsibly, including by engaging with local trade unions.  
Thank you for your consideration.

Yours Sincerely,



Ambet Yuson  
BWI General Secretary

Cc:

BWI Affiliates in Serbia

Saša Torlaković, president, Construction and Building Materials Industry Workers Union of Serbia

Duško Bošković, president Autonomous Trade Union of Road Maintenance Workers of Serbia

Zoran Radoman, president, Forestry and Woodworking Workers Union of Serbia

Dejan Titović, president, Branch union of agriculture and processing industry "NEZAVISNOST"